

# CHRISTIAN COURIER

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JAN 12 2009

What's behind the  
Jos crisis?...p.16

Journal of a Dutch  
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63rd year of publication

## During prorogation, CC interviews MPs from both sides of the House

**Joyce Murray,  
Liberal MP for  
Vancouver Quadra, BC**

**Angela Reitsma Bick, *Christian Courier* (CC):** There has been two years' worth of headlines in the past two weeks in Ottawa. What's the most important event or development, in your opinion?



**Murray:** A big positive out of the last two weeks is that Canadians are taking a real interest in politics. We've seen a lot of interest in the presidential race in the United States, but now we have an interest in Canadian politics. And the other positive is that there is a better understanding of how our political system works. What this past week has shown is that there is actually a great deal of misunderstanding about how it works. I think Prime Minister Stephen Harper had forgotten that if he doesn't have the confidence of the majority of the members of parliament, he's at risk of the majority of members banding together and saying, "Well, actually, we have some common objectives that we're prepared to work together on," and that's exactly what has happened with the Coalition. So, in my view, it was very positive, in that it showed that there was a third way

— not just my way or the electoral highway. We're seeing the fruits of that today, as his Finance Minister Jim Flaherty consulted with the Finance Critics in the opposition in a way he neglected to do before. So I think this has been a very positive two weeks in Canadian politics.

**CC:** Sort of a wake-up call for Stephen Harper?

**Murray:** Yes, a wake-up call to act like a minority PM — not to be confrontational and vengeful, but to be collaborative and to work together with others.

**CC:** Members of the Coalition have stated that they were unhappy with Harper's economic stimulus package. Was that the motivating factor, or would these parties have found another reason to band together?

**Murray:** No, there was nothing on the horizon. There was nothing in the works. Contrary to what Harper is saying, there was no discussion about that at the MP level, or at the leader level that I'm aware of.

**CC:** What is the status of the Coalition now?

**Murray:** We have an interim leader and that's Michael Ignatieff. Once the Governor General accepted Harper's request to prorogue the house, our party decided that we need to have a faster process to bringing in a new leader. There are logistical reasons why every MP wasn't contacted. On the basis of that process, Bob and Dominic decided to step out, which basically left Michael as the interim leader. The formal vote will happen as planned in May. The reality is that when there are no other contenders, we will have some stability and we

can expect that his leadership will be formalized at the convention.

**CC:** Did you play a part in forming the Coalition?

**Murray:** I played a part, as did all of the opposition MPs, in agreeing that we felt that we could work together and present a third way, so that it's not just Harper's way or another election. The majority of the parliament is not Conservative, and we felt that we could do a better job of managing the economy and the country than the Conservatives were doing. Essentially, that's what the Coalition was about. And yes, I agreed with that. I didn't think that another election was the right thing to do, and I didn't think that allowing Harper to dictate the terms with no reaching out was healthy for our democracy. I see it as a tool to ensure that Harper actually functions as a minority PM should.

**CC:** So the reasons for the Coalition's formation are still relevant?

**Murray:** Yes, because without it, we're back to a PM doing whatever he wants, and not taking into account the views and opinions of the majority of parliament.

**CC:** Do you think it's possible that coalition politics will become more common in Canada?

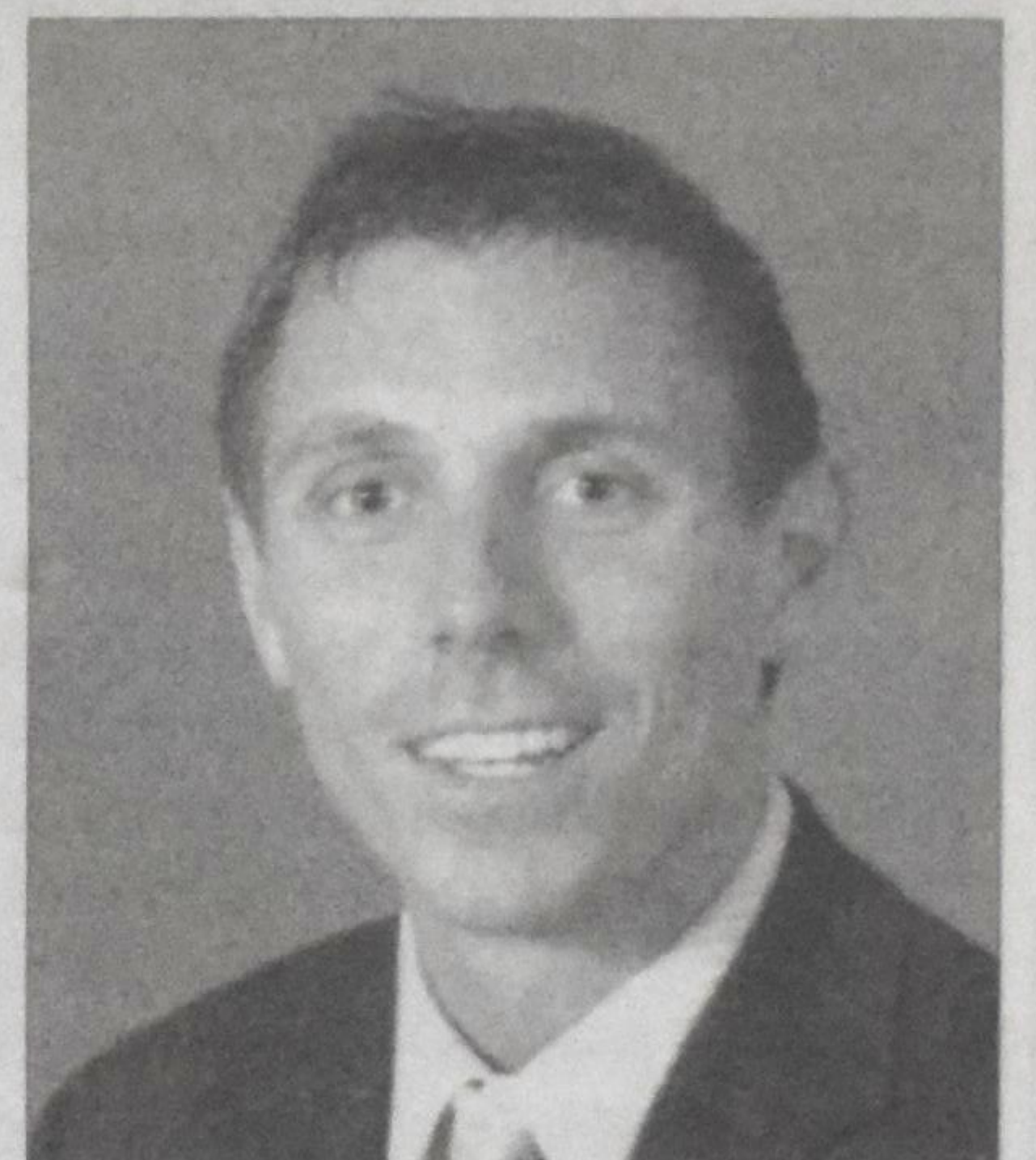
**Murray:** Well, it's widely predicted that we're going to have more minority parliaments, with the Bloc representing so many ridings in Canada, and with four parties vying for popularity. So, if we are going to have minority parliaments, we need to figure out how to function. Whoever is governing doesn't need to do everything the opposition wants, but they do need to have a collaborative approach.

**CC:** My last question is this: what do you see as the biggest challenge facing Canada right now?

**Murray:** Well, this global economic crisis is the biggest challenge right now. The long-term challenge is finding ways to make sure that we can protect our environment and doing it in a way that is an opportunity for a green economy. You can't have the environment take a back seat to the economy; people have to be able to meet their short term needs, like jobs and family security, in a way that is sustainable in the long-term.

**Patrick Brown,  
Conservative MP  
for Barrie, ON**

**Angela Reitsma Bick, *Christian Courier* (CC):** What do you think is the most important development in Ottawa recently?



**Brown:** For us, the most important focus of our government is the economy, but obviously the nation's affairs have been very much sidetracked by the proposed Coalition government. And the opposition leader, Stéphane Dion, lost his  
*See Interviews on p. 2*

## Keep political party financing public, says CPJ

**Chandra Pasma**

(Ottawa, ON): Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) expressed strong concern over the federal government's proposal to remove the \$1.75 per vote subsidy for political parties.

In a letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, CPJ board co-chairs Kathy Vandergrift and Jim Joosse outlined their hesitations about this proposal. "We sincerely question the

wisdom of such a policy, as it could weaken Canada's democratic system and encourage voter apathy, which has already reached a worrisome 41 per cent in the most recent election," the letter said.

The letter went on to discuss the importance of enhancing, not discouraging, civic participation. "CPJ has long worked to increase citizen participation in public affairs. . . . Activities that limit, constrain

and even exclude Canadians from participation in the political process are not helpful."

CPJ's concerns have been echoed across the country, and the government announced the plan to eliminate the subsidy will be debated at a later date, removing it from current legislation.

"While the government has dropped the proposal for the moment,  
*See Party financing on p. 3*



## News

# African churches pray for the end of Mugabe's regime in Zimbabwe

Dan Wooding

MAPUTO, MOZAMBIQUE – Africa's largest Christian grouping, the All Africa Conference of Churches, has pledged to "pray for an end to illegitimate rule in Zimbabwe" after debating and toning down a statement about the country on the doorstep of Mozambique, where they have been meeting – writes Frank Jomo for Ecumenical News International (ENI).

Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe "is using power-sharing negotiations as a strategy for wasting time and exercising continued control" over the southern African nation, the conference of churches said in a resolution issued in December.



Robert Mugabe

"It was passed after the issue of Zimbabwe arose a number of times during the once-every-five-years meeting of the AACC meeting in the Mozambican capital, Maputo, from December 7-12," said Jomo in his story.

"The church grouping called on the African Union and its 53 member nations to state clearly that the current Zimbabwean regime is 'illegitimate' and to stop recognizing it."

The resolution by the grouping of more

than 130 churches in 40 countries said, "The AU and SADC should intensify pressure on President Mugabe to relinquish control of the Zimbabwean government and should consider involving international bodies – such as the International Criminal Court – where appropriate."

Referring to the churches in Africa, the statement went on: "The AACC member churches confess that we have been slow to respond to the crisis in Zimbabwe and the suffering of the Zimbabwean people, in part because of our lack of unity."

Jomo said that in calling for prayer for an end to the "illegitimate rule", the churches in Maputo set January 25th as a time when the churches on the continent and around the world should engage in a Special Africa Day of Prayer and Fasting for Justice in Zimbabwe.

"Action should be taken for justice and peace in Zimbabwe through measures appropriate to their national contexts," reads part of the resolution. "Such activities might include advocacy visits to leaders of nations, regional structures like SADC and the African Union; marches and demonstrations, particularly outside of Zimbabwean embassies and consulates, and collecting funds and material to provide humanitarian aid and address the cholera crisis."

The original proposal had called for a great march made up of church leaders



Maputo, Mozambique

from all over the continent, but this was toned down.

Jomo stated that during the formulation of the statement, there were concerns that delegates cared only about the economic, governance, political and social crisis affecting the country and were neglecting spiritual concerns where the government has closed churches deemed to be critical of Mugabe and his regime.

In the resolution, the AACC called on the government of Zimbabwe to accord freedom of worship to all its citizens and to permit them access to their resources and property. It singled out especially the Harare diocese of the Anglican Church of the Province of Central Africa.

The former president of Mozambique, Joaquim Chissano, called on Mugabe for genuine dialogue with the opposing political parties and to end violence in his country.

He said dialogue was the only solution to the

Zimbabwe crisis, citing himself as an example. Chissano said at the height of his country's 16-year-old civil war and with the help of the Church, he sat down with opposition leader Alfonso Dhlakama, a move that became the catalyst for peace in the country.

Dan Wooding, 67, is an award winning British journalist now living in Southern California with his wife Norma. He is also the author of 42 books, the latest of which is his autobiography, *From Tabloid to Truth*.



## Interviews...continued from page 1

job over it. It was a disaster. Canadians are rightly outraged that the Liberal Party would attempt to form a party with the separatists and socialists without having a mandate from the Canadian people. I've been hearing in my office that life-long Liberals – loyal to the memory of Pearson, Trudeau, and Chrétien – have abandoned their party over this. I think the Liberal party's credibility has been damaged because it shows how low they will go for the pursuit of power. It's un-Canadian to entertain a new government without an election. You know, we hear stories about that in places like far-off Thailand, but we never expect it to occur in Canada. When I first heard the rumours, I thought I was hearing an April fool's joke.

**CC:** Do you believe that the economic stimulus package was the reason for forming a Coalition, or would it have happened regardless?

**Brown:** That was their original spin, but as I'm sure you've heard, there was a leaked transcript of a Liberal-NDP caucus; they had accidentally invited a Conservative MP onto their conference call, and that was sent to the media. And in that conference call Jack Layton revealed that he had been working on this two weeks prior to the economic stimulus. Their coup was planned regardless. Official discussions with the Bloc had also

happened two weeks earlier.

**CC:** Were you in Ottawa while this was going on?

**Brown:** Yes. All members of parliament were obviously there, and very nervous. It was only two months ago that Canadians went to the polls, and how our democratic choice could be challenged so quickly after the election is beyond astonishing.

**CC:** What do you think of the Liberal's accusation that Stephen Harper has been rather uncooperative, that he hasn't listened to suggestions from the other parties?

**Brown:** Well, the Liberal party made that charge in the last election, saying that Harper didn't acquiesce enough. But Canadians don't want a leader without a vision. Paul Martin ran a minority government where his priorities changed every day, and the economists gave him the nickname Mr. Dithers. Stephen Harper isn't Mr. Dithers. He isn't going to change on a whim because the Liberal party doesn't like something. His budgets aren't going to be dictated by what the opposition wants. He received a mandate from the Canadian people and in the last election he was on the cusp of a majority. If he allowed the opposition to make the budget, that would be a slap in the face to everyone who voted for the Conservative

party.

**CC:** The Liberal MP I talked to yesterday said that the Coalition is still a viable thing, and they will be together in the New Year; is that the same thing you're hearing?

**Brown:** I'm hearing that it will continue, but I predict that it's going to fall apart. At the end of the day, the most powerful current in politics is the people – public opinion. And polls show that 70 per cent of Canadians are unhappy with the Coalition. And I don't know how the Coalition could simply ignore the will of the people. I imagine that there are a lot of MPs who realize that their jobs are at risk. I make this prediction: if the Coalition follows through on what it's said, we'll see some serious losses for the opposition in the next election.

**CC:** Do you believe that Coalition politics have a place in Canada?

**Brown:** No. I believe that what's worked in Canada since 1867 should continue. And that is governments that are elected by the people, not back-room deals.

**CC:** What do you see as the biggest challenge facing Canada right now?

**Brown:** Our economy. To make sure that we protect jobs and to make sure that families have incomes to provide for food and necessities in their homes. And that should be the only priority of parliament, and it's too bad that we have to struggle through this fight over a proposed coup. Once we overcome this, the only thing we should focus on as a nation should be the slowing economy.

**CC:** So the Conservative budget coming out in January will address all these concerns?

**Brown:** Exactly.



## News/Politics

# A public justice vision for 2009

Chandra Pasma

"Where there is no vision, the people perish," the writer of Proverbs tells us (Proverbs 29:18). These seem apt words for today.

While the start of a new year usually holds great promise, 2009 is not looking so bright. As an economic downturn descends upon us, everyone is waiting to see what will happen next. We await the government's response to the economic crisis, which will be announced in the Speech from the Throne and the budget at the end of January. We also wait to see which political party or parties will be in government following these announcements. So far, our political leaders have not offered any vision for 2009. But while 2009 is beginning with a crisis, that doesn't mean it can't hold hope for a better future.

Citizens for Public Justice's vision for 2009 is a year in which our political parties work together to achieve the common good. 2009 can be an opportunity for public justice. God calls us to practice justice, compassion, love and stewardship. We must do this in every aspect of our lives, including as citizens. Public justice is a biblical vision that offers a better way of living together, a careful analysis of how society works, and principles to guide governments in making decisions that affect daily life. For government, public justice requires promoting just relations between people within God's creation, correcting injustice, protecting the environment and nurturing conditions that enhance the common good. So what could this look like in practice for 2009?

2009 marks the 20th anniversary of an all-party resolution passed in the House of Commons to end child poverty by the year 2000. That 1989 commitment was never met. 20 years later, it's time for the government to make good on that promise. A comprehensive poverty reduction strategy introduced in the 2009 budget and developed in consultation with citizens over the course of the year would offer hopeful change to the 3.3 million Canadians living in poverty. It would also provide assistance to those Canadians who will suffer most during this economic downturn. Measures to reduce poverty, such as reforming the

Employment Insurance program and investing in affordable housing, early learning and child care, also act as automatic stabilizers for the economy by providing cash transfers and jobs. They are a compassionate stimulus plan.

The unanimous resolution 20 years ago also suggests another opportunity for 2009: the example of all parties working together for the good of the most vulnerable Canadians. Whether the Conservatives stay in government or a coalition takes over, political parties need to cooperate. We need to see a return of the conciliation and cooperation promised in the November Throne Speech. Parliamentarians of every party represent the legitimately held views of Canadians. All Canadians deserve respect and the right to have their voices heard in the decisions of our country. This cannot be accomplished unless parties are willing to put aside partisan attacks and work together to achieve the common good.

Finally, 2009 marks another milestone: in Copenhagen, world leaders will finalize the successor treaty to the Kyoto Accord. This treaty will mandate the world's response to climate change. Canada will be expected to lower its GHG emissions much more than in the government's current weak commitment. Canada must accept responsibility for its climate change actions, and stop hampering the global process. We need to participate in negotiating a robust plan that commits every country to enacting their fair share of change. We must then create and implement our own plan of action to meet our responsibilities.

Taking action on climate change will require difficult changes. But it will also prevent many harmful consequences of our current irresponsible behaviours. Investing in new, green technologies and practices can also stimulate our economy. Canadians would be wise to continue to lower their own emissions, as more change will be expected of us and our way of life.

In November, Barack Obama's new chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel, said, "You never want a serious crisis to go to waste." The incoming US administration sees an opportunity

## Harper's (temporary) reprieve



## Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

Stephen Harper may or may not still be prime minister in a few weeks. At the end of the month his minority government, which just "won" re-election in October, will bring down the budget, and there is a good possibility that it will not survive the subsequent vote in the House of Commons. That two opposition political parties would conspire to topple a sitting government and replace it with a coalition government is nearly unprecedented in Canada's history. It would not be unusual in some European countries, but those of us living under Westminster-style systems have generally shunned multiparty coalition governments as somehow undemocratic – as if party leaders collaborating to form a government are somehow frustrating the will of the voters.

As we all know, Harper postponed this possibility by requesting Governor General Michaëlle Jean to prorogue Parliament scarcely three weeks after she had convened it – another unprecedented move. Although this arguably flirted with the edges of democracy, it nevertheless averted a confidence vote and bought Harper a little more time to come up with another strategy for staying in power.

Since then the Liberals have replaced the irascible Stéphane Dion with the coolly intellectual Michael Ignatieff. Could Ignatieff and the New Democratic Party's Jack Layton govern in an alliance of convenience? Together they boast only 114 seats as compared to the 143 held by the Conservatives. One-hundred fifty-five are needed for a majority. This means that the separatist Bloc Québécois holds the balance of power with 49 seats. Its members will not, of course, participate in a coalition government, because they have few aspirations beyond being a protest party. But it is not clear that they can credibly prop up a federalist coalition government whose member parties are more centralizing than the Conservatives. After all, it was a Liberal government that authored the Clarity Act of 2000, which put legal obstacles in the way of Québec separation and is hated in that province.

So what is the alternative? Given that 62.37 percent of Canadians voted against Harper, he might conceivably negotiate with Ignatieff towards forming a grand coalition government, rather like that between Angela Merkel's Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats in Germany. To be sure, the business of government would not move quickly under such an arrangement, but the divided verdict of Canadians last autumn may have left our politicians with few alternatives.

Harper might do well to cast a backward glance to consider the fate of Prime Minister Joe Clark back in December 1979, when he tried to govern as if he had a majority, but found his minority government quickly defeated on the budget. If, as political scientist Henry Milner believes, we are in for a protracted period of minority government, our leaders will have to overcome their overwrought fears of co-operating with the other parties and sit down and actually talk with them rather than just shouting at them from across the floor of the Commons.

In the Canadian context a grand coalition government is probably an idea whose time has not yet come. Short of this, Finance Minister Jim Flaherty should at least be listening to his Liberal and New Democratic counterparts, John McCallum and Thomas Mulcair respectively, as he puts together his party's budget. The shift in Flaherty's economic forecast from an overly rosy budget surplus to a more realistic deficit position is evidence that he is already taking into account the concerns of the opposition parties. At a time of global financial uncertainty this is, if not exactly good news, at least less bad than it could be.



David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and is the author of the award-winning *Political Visions and Illusions* (InterVarsity Press).

His blog can be found at: <http://byzantinecalvinist.blogspot.com/>.

to do politics differently. There is no reason why Canada can't also take this moment of rethinking, restructuring and economic stimulus to offer hope and to create a better future.

Chandra Pasma is a policy analyst with Citizens for Public Justice, [www.cpj.ca](http://www.cpj.ca).

## Party financing...continued from p.1

its presence in the economic and fiscal statement is of concern," said Joe Gunn, CPJ executive director. "Public subsidies give Canadians an added incentive to be part of the political process and vote for candidates whom they support, regardless of their chance of winning.

"With voter turnout at an all-time low, we should be more concerned with encouraging democracy and consulting Canadians on changes to the electoral system, not introducing controversial reforms."

Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) is a national organization that

promotes public justice in Canada by shaping key policy debates through research and analysis, publishing and public dialogue. CPJ encourages citizens, leaders in society and governments to support policies and practices that reflect God's call for love, justice and stewardship.

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## Editorials

## New Year's revolutions



Brett Alan Dewing

"I buy a lot of diaries, fill them full of good intentions. Each and every New Year's Eve, I make myself a list: all the things I'm going to change until January second." So begins Carolyn Arends's "New Year's Day," and perhaps so began your New Year's Day as well. We

are renowned for this, aren't we? Every 365 days, give or take a Leap, we intensely swear on or off certain habits, and then a week or so later (if we're lucky), we mourn our lack of discipline with even greater intensity.

And yet. Skip forward a few months to another Western holiday tradition, namely Lent. Many Christians – Catholic or Protestant, practicing or not – choose something to abandon in the weeks leading up to Easter. Be their vice caffeine or bubble gum, most seem to make it through the 40 days (or more, depending on your practices) of abstinence called for by Lenten tradition. And these same upright folks fight to drink diet cola for even a week when the resolution comes in January.

What makes the difference? Is it the time of year? Perhaps we are so tired from our Christmas and New Year (and Thanksgiving, and Halloween, and the start of school...) that starting a new discipline in the first weeks after the madness stops is too much to ask. Perhaps the cold and shortened days affect our mood, sapping us of our optimism and tenacity. Or is it that Lent is meant to be a spiritual exercise while New Year's resolutions seem simply focused on our terrestrial lives?

These are all valid explanations, but I think the main difference rests in the fact that Lent has an end point, an escape hatch. It is an exercise, a metaphor, a seasonal decoration. New Year is open-ended, never-turning-back, self-altering change. And that, to a temporal being, is maybe the most terrifying thing there is.

## "Lost the Plot" attitude

When it comes to real life change, our attitude can perhaps be described by the words of the Newsboys' song, "Lost the Plot":

*When you come back again,  
would you bring me something from the fridge?  
Heard a rumour that the end is near,  
but I just got comfortable here.  
Sigh.  
Let's be blunt.  
I'm a little distracted.  
What do you want?*

As the song suggests, we have indeed lost the plot of life in the Kingdom of God. The main fact we are missing may be that said Kingdom is present as we speak, move, and have our being. In other words, we are new *today*. Right now.

In fact, in Luke 17:21 Jesus lets us (and the Pharisees) know that "the Kingdom of God is within you." 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us that "if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!" Romans 6:6, Ephesians 4:22, and Colossians 3:9 all implore us to "put away the old self" and embrace our status as new creations. And while we all know these verses by heart, we almost never act as if they are true.

## The now and the not yet

But there is good news. We have not lost our "new self" status by abandoning it. It is still there in the cosmic lost and found waiting to be claimed. As Cameron Crowe once wrote, "every passing second is another chance to turn it all around." All it takes is that mustard seed faith that chooses to believe the truth of Scripture's words.

One of my favourite promises comes in Hebrews 10:14, where Paul tells us that Christ's sacrifice has "forever perfected those who are being sanctified." Perfected? Howsthewhatnow? If we know one thing about ourselves it is that we are far from perfect. It's not ULIP, after all. And yet, we are told that not only are we perfected, we are perfected forever! Yet still being sanctified.

How do we reconcile these seemingly contradictory claims, separated by barely a word or two within God's inspired text? This tension is a reality that has been called the "Now and Not Yet." Some of you may be hearing that phrase for the first time or the one hundred and first, while others may recognize it as an Amy Grant song or a spin on the title of a Margaret Avison book.

The idea is that the Now (our present less-than-perfect selves) and the Not Yet (our promised future sanctity) are both present at all times. We are both perfect and being perfected. We are both new creatures and old creatures. The call of Christ is to choose the "Not Yet," to live in the Kingdom now instead of waiting for the New Earth. And all it takes is a simple, albeit perpetually renewed, decision to be new. Scripture talks about our new nature as a suit of clothes. Every morning, it is our duty to slip that suit on and trust in God's power to help us feel comfortable in it.

Can you brave a future of never looking back?

Will you be the salt of the earth or a pillar of salt?

When we approach every day as New Year's Day, we find it easier to rest in God's strength, taking this perfection thing one moment at a time. And when the old self rears its fallen head, we don't despair, because the new is present at all times as well, and we are still just as close to God's sanctification: one choice away.

Brett Alan Dewing is feature editor of Christian Courier.  
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## The rogue and fool



Angela Bick-Reitsma

Whatever else it is, you can't complain that things have been boring on Parliament Hill lately. We are hurtling through "sad days" and "historic moments" faster than the scribes at Wikipedia can keep up. In his *Epistle II: of the Nature and State of Man*,

Alexander Pope said that "The rogue and fool by fits is fair and wise." In other words – inconsistent. In other words – always changing the rules. In other words – our current Prime Minister.

Before last December, most Canadians would have needed a dictionary after any talk of *prorogation*; now, however, we're all too familiar with the unusual verb *prorogue*. It's in the headline of every national newspaper and it has frozen events in Ottawa until the end of January. It has ceased the fiery verbal attacks in the House of Commons, but every wary watcher knows that this is only the eye of the storm. Calm may prevail for the moment, but in proroguing parliament, Stephen Harper has proven himself a rogue – wise and fair in fits.

This word, French in origin, gives us several interesting ways to look at the situation. A rogue is typically haughty and arrogant, which applies to Harper. He frequently sounds more like the Prime Minister of a comfortable majority government rather than a weak-kneed minority one. A rogue can be deliberately dishonest, the sort of person to call an election just after pontificating about fixed-election dates. In his address to the nation on December 3rd, Harper used harsher rhetoric than usual when he called the Bloc "sovereignists" in French but "separatists" in English. A rogue elephant – if it feels threatened – may become similarly savage.

## Fitful Wisdom

Nonetheless, I believe Harper did the right thing in requesting, literally, that parliament be postponed. To allow the non-confidence vote to usher in a coalition government on even shakier ground than his own would have been disastrous. Dion, hoping for control of this country on Monday, December 8, had lost by Wednesday the control of his own party. In this case, Harper's fitful wisdom came to the fore.

Now it remains to be seen whether this prorogation will end for Harper as it did for the only other Canadian PM, Mackenzie King, to try something similar – with his forced resignation. We have the benefit of perspective with King, however; he was re-elected soon afterward and in a stronger position. Let the rogue's march begin.

Angela is the Christian Courier's news editor, and she welcomes comments to [angela@christiancourier.ca](mailto:angela@christiancourier.ca).  
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## Christian Courier

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## News/Letters

## What's new at CC?

Starting with this first issue of *Christian Courier* in the year 2009, you will notice a few changes. First of all, our two new coeditors are at work visibly and behind the scenes. The two editorials show them expressing their thoughts, but a lot of the work that went into this issue was done behind the scenes. Angela took care of the news stories and Brett looked after the feature articles. My role as coeditor is coordinating the editorials, the letters and the columnists. All of this implies that if you have a news story to submit, send it to Angela, the News Editor. If you want to submit a story, an essay, a book review or poetry, send it to Brett, the Feature Editor. Letters, editorials and columns go to me, the Op-Ed Editor.

Further changes this year will be the addition of six new columnists. Lloyd Rang, a political consultant who lives in Bowmanville, will write on trends in popular culture, Brian Dykema of Ottawa wants to hold forth under the heading "The liberal artist," while Derek Schuurman, a professor at Redeemer University College, will focus on faith and technology. Denise Dykstra, a young mother of five in Edmonton, will deal with parenting (adoption, fostering, inter-racial family), Rudy Eikelboom, a professor of psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University, will focus on faith and science, and Paula Warkentin from Winnipeg will tell about her experiences as a special-needs teacher assistant in that city.

We will also start a short-term column written by senior or graduate students from our various Christian colleges. Each issue will feature one such student as he or she reflects on what the college experience has meant to them. In this issue, we begin with a reflection by Natalie Armstrong. The person who has coordinated this effort on our behalf is Brandon Jorritsma, a Redeemer grad who is looking forward to studying journalism at Ryerson Institute in Toronto. We don't know how long this series will last, or what type of column will morph from it. We welcome suggestions from our readers. Anyone who graduated from university or college within the last 10 years and likes to tell what he or she learned from their years at such schools is invited to email Brandon at: [brandon\\_jorritsma@hotmail.com](mailto:brandon_jorritsma@hotmail.com).

We had to discontinue two columns, unfortunately. Lisa Petsch will no longer write for CC, and Rick de Graaf is leaving his post at Christian Stewardship Services in the coming months. We thank both writers for the excellent work they have done for our readership.

We expect further additions or changes in the future, but for now we want you to catch your breath and take in the new scenery under the B.A.B. banner.

Bert Witvoet

## What do you think?

Occasionally I come across the expression that freedom from poverty is a human right. The expression puzzles me. Part of the statement sounds good to me. If poverty prevents a person from reaching her potential, that seems to be a violation of her right to develop and grow. But there is another part of it that makes me question the wisdom of pushing poverty into the realm of easily recognizable human rights, such as freedom of religion, freedom of speech and freedom from discrimination. So here's my challenge to you, readers. Write a paragraph or two in response to the statement that "freedom from poverty is a human right." We will publish some of your letters.

BW

## Tolerance around Christmas

In the last issue of CC (December 22) we reprinted some comments from four readers about the Jacob Beam Public School sign that read: "THE HIGHEST RESULT OF EDUCATION IS TOLERANCE."

I was reminded of this discussion when I came across a column by Lorne Gunther in the *National Post*. At a previous time he had written about the way our society chips away at Christmas in the name of tolerance. His piece evoked strong reactions, both for and against. A woman from Edmonton complained that she had to put up with "all this Christmas crap everywhere we go."

Gunther writes: "Her belief, though, that she should be able to live her life without ever confronting 'Christmas crap,' is typical of the obnoxiousness of modern human rights thinking. It holds that certain favoured groups should never face messages with which they disagree. This has led to the distorted notion among members of politically correct groups that they will never be truly free until people with whom they disagree are made to shut up, or at least relegated to speaking their minds only in private."

Gunther followed up this sharp observation with an example that will ring true with a lot of our readers: "But just imagine how devoted Christian, Muslim and Jewish parents feel when trying to keep their children chaste in a culture soaked through with sexual messaging and imagery. In a society that values free expression, we all have to put up with views with which we disagree, sometimes overwhelming views. That's the true meaning of tolerance."

I liked Gunther's approach, although, I think it has a weakness. We don't want to tolerate all kinds of blatant sexual imagery. There are limits to freedom of expression. And to tell you the truth, if I were an atheist, I would also be annoyed with "all this Christmas crap everywhere you go." For more than one reason, in fact. The blatant commercialism is one. The lack of esthetic is another. But I would also dislike it because I wouldn't believe in it. My sensitive atheist soul would be offended. But that doesn't mean I would have a right to prevent others from hearing and seeing it.

B.W.

## You never know!

One of our columnists, Heidi VanderSlikke, got an unexpected response to a column she wrote April 2007, entitled "New Shoes."

"What are the odds of a Jewish banker from Toronto ending up with a copy of my column on his desk?" she asked us. She forwarded the following email to us:

Dear Heidi,

My name is Jeff Denaburg. My grandfather was Sam Magder and my uncle was Jack Magder, of Smithville, Ontario. I recently received a copy of an article that you wrote about the Magder "dry goods" store in Smithville! I want to tell you that my brother and I thoroughly enjoyed reading your article.

Although we grew up in Toronto, we visited my grandparents frequently and spent many hours in the store. Your description of my grandfather, my uncle and their store is marvelous. It's exactly how I remember it, and it brings back wonderful memories for me. You have an excellent memory and you write beautifully.

It was great of you to write this article and I wanted to let you that it meant a lot to me. My compliments and thanks.

Jeff Denaburg,  
Toronto

## Whose world order?

Allow me to respond to Professor Bom's comments made in "The proof is in the Records" (Dec. 8, 2008).

In a curious amalgam of generalizations, contradictions, ad hominem, and twisted logic, Mr. Bom tried to make the point that the "American Way" is good and that socialism is bad. Now, since every "ism" is an exaggeration, we must operate carefully when we use that term. The same applies to the term "Americanism."

What is clear is that Mr. Bom sets up socialism as a straw man – it is the cause of "increasing secularization of our countries, and the growing restrictions on the free expression of Christian belief." Reminiscent of the Rev. Dr. Carl McIntyre, "You can not peacefully co-exist with the Godless Communist."

In his conclusion Mr. Bom expresses the hope that "an Obama administration did not advance socialist agendas and did not move towards more one-world power structures."

Is he referring to the one-world order proclaimed by a former U.S. President? This "new" world order would preach to the whole world the good news of the cherished ideas of deregulated capitalism, political democracy (not to be confused with economic democracy), free unfettered markets.

Considering the present state of the U.S. economic and financial markets, direct government intervention, the use of taxpayers' money to bail out private enterprise, it seems to me that a little more socialism might not have been such a bad thing.

Lippe C. de Haan,  
Exeter, Ontario

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## News

# EU Leadership's shocking intolerance at dissent from Leftist Agenda unveiled

Ellen M. Rice

PRAGUE — An "EU assault" is what Christopher Booker of the *London Telegraph* has called the December 5th meeting between Vaclav Klaus, President of the Czech Republic, and members of the Conference of the Presidents of the European Parliament.

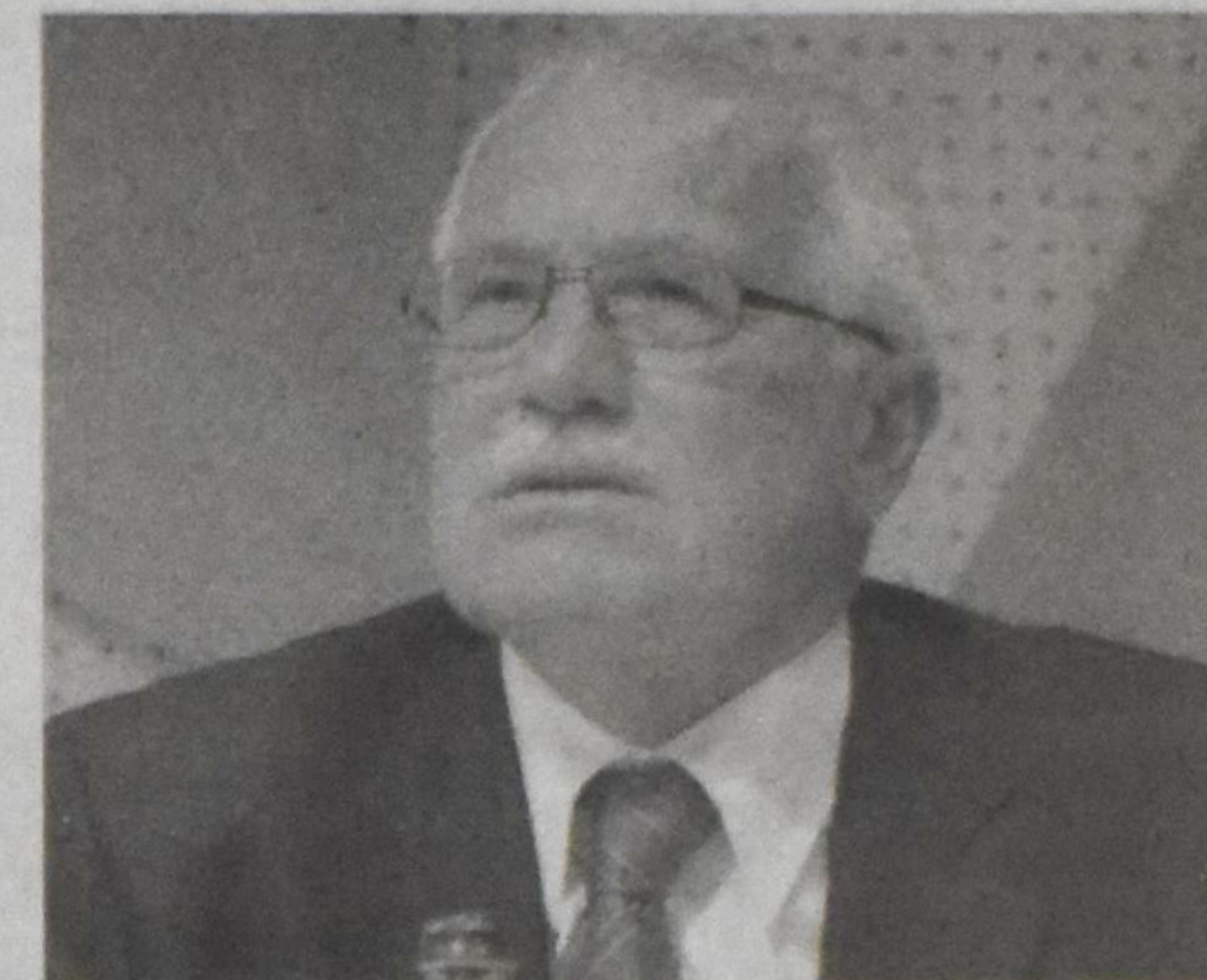
The Czech Republic's upcoming six-month presidency of the European Union in January has been a concern to leftist EU-elites who are attempting to push their socially liberal agenda on member states.

So far, the Czech Republic is the only EU country not to have taken a position on the Lisbon Treaty, an agreement that critics have denounced as a cosmetically altered version of the EU constitution. (The constitution was defeated in 2005 when France and the Netherlands voted against its ratification in national referenda.) The Czech Republic is also among the countries cited by the EU as discriminatory against homosexuals.

At the meeting, Greens/EFA co-president Daniel Cohn-Bendit rejected the Czech President's attempts to voice his concerns

regarding the Lisbon Treaty: "I don't care about your opinions on it. I want to know what you are going to do if the Czech Chamber of Deputies and the Senate approve it. Will you respect the will of the representatives of the people?"

Klaus has been a vociferous opponent of the Lisbon Treaty, as he believes it "will change the Czech Republic's international position and may reduce its sovereignty." According to the *Prague Daily Monitor*, he will follow Polish President Lech Kaczynski's example in delaying his



Vaclav Klaus, President of the Czech Republic whose parliament has approved the Lisbon Treaty, but the decision for full ratification is awaiting the verdict of the country's Constitutional Court.

approval of the treaty for as long as possible.

Cohn-Bendit also interrogated Klaus about his associations with Lisbon Treaty opponent Declan Ganley: "I want you to explain to me what is the level of your friendship with Mr. Ganley from Ireland. You are not supposed to meet him in your function."

And Brian Crowley, the Irish leader of the UEN Party, insisted that, despite the resounding "No" vote by the Irish in the recent referendum, the Irish in fact "wish for the Lisbon Treaty."

Klaus responded to both Cohn-Bendit and Crowley by saying, "I must say that the biggest insult to the Irish people is not to accept the result of the Irish referendum. In Ireland I met somebody who represents a majority in his country. You, Mr. Crowley, represent a view which is in minority in Ireland. That is a tangible result of the referendum."

Crowley rebuked the Czech President, "You will not tell me what the Irish think. As an Irishman, I know it best." Klaus responded, "I do not speculate about what the Irish think. I state the only measurable data which were proved by the referendum."

Observers have denounced the EU for not accepting the Irish vote and for strong-arming the Irish into holding a second referendum.

Near the end of the meeting, Klaus asserted that the brow-beating he had just endured for his and his country's attitudes toward the Lisbon Treaty and the EU's policies on global warming and homosexual marriage proved that "post-democracy...rules the EU."

"This bizarre confrontation," wrote Booker, "confirms the inability of the Euro-elite to accept that anyone holds different views from their own.... [W]hen it comes to 'Europe,' the system has no place for opposition. Everything must be decided by 'consensus,' directed from the top."

Ellen M. Rice writes for Lifesitenews.net.

## The Abbotsford BFM Thrift Store expands its mission

Gertie Pool

In 1991, when the 70-year dominance of communism collapsed in Russia, the Christian world switched gears from simply praying for lost souls to actually reaching out and touching them in various ways.

When Ben and Hennie De Regt from Abbotsford, BC heard of the dire need in Eastern Europe for Bibles, assistance for illiteracy education programs, evangelistic training tools, and the cost of Bible interpretation in 450 languages, they rolled up their sleeves and went to work.

They opened the first Bibles for Missions (BFM) Thrift Store. Once they decided to work under the umbrella of the Bible League, the blessings start pouring in and remarkable profits began to show. What started out as a mustard seed idea 20 years ago has unfolded into a highly successful venture of good will. Now this hard-working community is called upon to fulfill a much larger role.

Today the BFM goes far beyond simply providing Bibles. Their original idea has expanded into stores across Canada, USA, New Zealand and Australia (where they are called "Pop-Shops").

Part of all store proceeds now go towards providing local Christians with the equipment and evangelistic training materials necessary to start planting new churches all over the world. The Bible League hopes to provide 85,000 more Bibles, in addition to New Testaments, study materials and educational literature, to ministry partners across Russia in 2009.

"Since the early 90's, more than 1,460 new churches in Russia have sprung to life. Local churches report over 326,000 Bible study completions and 58,000 new members added to the church."

"Although our main goal is to spread the Gospel overseas, we definitely do not forget the needy in our own community either. When someone comes along in need of clothing or any other item, we help them along to the best of our ability.

All of the store's proceeds go to the Bible League. "There is no doubt, working in the BFM store here gives one a most gratifying feeling in helping to spread the Gospel and to provide a worthy service to people right around you. It's also great to know that every dollar we make is put to good use and applied to needy causes both at home and abroad," says co-founder of the Abbotsford Thrift Store, Henry De Jong.

"Thrift Stores in the past were not to everybody's liking. But with far better quality items on the shelves today, this vibrant volunteer service presents a welcome boost for customers in this ever-tightening budget crunch that we see today," De Jong explains.

To date, the 38 BFM Canadian Thrift Stores alone have been able to send \$25,000,000 to The Bible League since 1989.

The League's Vision for 2020 is to train 10 million nationals to engage 100 million people in the study of God's Word through placing Bibles in their homes.



Henry De Jong & Jack Van der Meulen loading a used dryer for a customer



Volunteer Joan Beukema checking for cleanliness.



Volunteer Jean Saathof cleaning shelves.



## Stewardship

## THE YEAR 1908

*This will boggle your mind, I know it did mine!  
The year is 1908.*

*One hundred years ago.*

*What a difference a century makes!*

*Here are some statistics for the Year 1908 :*

The average life expectancy was 47 years.

Only 14 percent of the homes had a bathtub.

Only 8 percent of the homes had a telephone.

There were only 8,000 cars and only 144 miles of paved roads.

The maximum speed limit in most cities was 10 mph.

The tallest structure in the world was the Eiffel Tower!

The average wage in 1908 was 22 cents per hour.

The average worker made between \$200 and \$400 per year.

A competent accountant could expect to earn \$2000 per year, a dentist \$2,500 per year, a veterinarian between \$1,500 and \$4,000 per year, and a mechanical engineer about \$5,000 per year.

More than 95 percent of all births took place at HOME.

Ninety percent of all doctors had NO COLLEGE EDUCATION! Instead, they attended so-called medical schools, many of which were condemned in the press AND by the government as "substandard."

Sugar cost four cents a pound.

Eggs were fourteen cents a dozen.

Coffee was fifteen cents a pound.

Most women only washed their hair once a month, and used Borax or egg yolks for shampoo.

Canada passed a law that prohibited poor people from entering into their country for any reason.

Five leading causes of death were:

1. Pneumonia and influenza
2. Tuberculosis
3. Diarrhea
4. Heart disease
5. Stroke

The American flag had 45 stars.

The population of Las Vegas, Nevada, was only 30!

Crossword puzzles, canned beer, and ice tea hadn't been invented yet.

There was no Mother's Day or Father's Day.

Two out of every 10 adults couldn't read or write.

Only 6 percent of all Americans had graduated from high school.

Marijuana, heroin, and morphine were all available over the counter at the local corner drugstores.

## New Beginnings

*The seasons are fixed by wisdom divine,  
The slow-changing moon shows forth God's design.  
The sun in its circuit its Maker obeys  
and, running its journey, hastes not nor delays.*

*The LORD makes the night, when, leaving their lair,  
the lions go forth, God's bounty to share.  
The LORD makes the morning, when beasts steal away,  
when we are beginning the work of the day.*

*How many and wise the works of the LORD!  
The earth with its wealth of creatures is stored."*  
(1987 Psalter Hymnal #104:8, 9, 10a –  
setting of Ps. 104:19-24)

Aren't you glad that God is in charge? The workings of nature are a wonder to behold. The seasons serve to remind us of God's grand design. Yet we are creatures of limited time. There is new life and there is death. We are finite but created for the infinite – we see life begin and life end, but have not yet experienced the infinite.

2008 was a year of many endings for me personally. In May I said goodbye to Harold, a close friend from high school. A month later I said goodbye to my dear Mother; only a few weeks after that, we said goodbye to a favourite uncle who leaves a widow, who is dying of cancer. It didn't stop there, however. In September the editor of the *Christian Courier* passed away, and, then, in November, while I was visiting Cambodia on an assignment with CRWRC, the Lord took home my brother-in-law Martin at the age of 58. It was a year of endings for us but it was beginnings for them. Because they believed and confessed Jesus as their Saviour, they have started new beginnings! They died in hope and expectation; yet, we mourn the loss of their presence among us.

Although many of us at this time of year will be reflective and maybe even melancholic, we should not get caught up in the gloom but rather latch onto the same hope that my dear friend, my mother, my uncle, Harry and Martin clearly confessed. Since life is for the living, we need to live for Jesus – the great giver of life.

So we can think about new beginnings – new challenges as we steward all of our time, talents, and resources for the "life-giving gospel"! Some things we need to leave behind so that we can pick up the new challenge that God places before us. Let us not be encumbered by the things of the past that limit and prevent us. As Hebrews 12:1 and 2 so aptly exhorts us:

*"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything*

*Eighteen percent of households had at least one full-time servant or domestic help.*

*There were about 230 reported murders in the ENTIRE U.S.A.!*

*Now I forwarded this from someone else without typing it myself, and sent it to you and others all over Canada & U.S.A; possibly the world, in a matter of seconds!*

*Try to imagine what it may be like in another 100 years.*

IT STAGGERS THE MIND!

## Reflections on Stewardship

Rick DeGraaf

*that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."*

Allow yourself to be led to make changes or adopt new approaches that open up new beginnings in relationships and work that will make a difference for the Kingdom of God. Make some new beginnings as you begin a New Year! Take up the challenge in the Steward's tip.

It will be a special challenge this year for Edith and me as we make the move to Cambodia. Yes, to Cambodia with CRWRC! It has been my privilege to have this "window" to share reflections on stewardship with you since August 2004. But apart from maybe an occasional submission from Cambodia that the editor(s) may print, I will be closing this "window." Other writers will take up the task. For now, Edith and I are making the necessary preparations so that we can leave and set up a new home in Phnom Penh. I hope to provide more details in the next issue.

It is our hope and prayer that you will support and bless us as we take our leave. Over the years, many of you approached me and encouraged me to keep on writing. Thank you – we treasure your support and blessing as we start a new beginning for us in Cambodia.

May God bless all your 'new beginnings' in 2009 as well!

**Stewardly tip: Habits:** Begin at least one new good habit. Yes One! If you have a list of resolutions, then prioritize and pick the top one. Commit to that top one and record it. Pin it up somewhere to remind you. In time it will become a habit and you won't need to remind yourself. Suggestions: a fixed quiet time; a time of devotion; a time of prayer; a new "personal development" book every quarter.

**Readers:** Share your "Stewardly tips" so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestions (by mail to *Christian Courier* or by email to my address below) and provide your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask you for more details.

Next issue: Goodbyes

*Rick DeGraaf works for Christian Stewardship Services in Markham, Ontario Rick's email: rickd@csservices.ca*



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## Church

# Are there many paths to heaven?

52 per cent of American Christians say so

Marian Van Til

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A report released in December by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life reveals that the majority of American Christians have abandoned the basic truth of biblical Christianity: that Jesus Christ is the only Savior of the world.

Fifty-two per cent of Christians hold this “open” view of salvation, the report discovered. Of those, 80 per cent named at least one non-Christian group who they believe may be saved. In addition, 52 per cent of respondents who are members of denominations, independent or local churches that teach that Jesus is the only way of salvation reject that teaching. Christian believers who named at least one non-Christian faith that could lead to salvation included 34 per cent of white evangelicals, even though evangelical doctrine stresses that salvation is possible only through Jesus.

Higher levels of church attendance made some difference, particularly among white evangelical Protestants. But an overall majority (54 per cent) who identified with a religion and who said they attend church weekly also said many religions can lead to

eternal life. This majority included 37 per cent of white evangelicals, 75 per cent of mainline Protestants and 85 per cent of non-Hispanic white Catholics.

The December report clarifies an earlier report Pew whose accuracy was questioned because some survey respondents apparently confused other Christian denominations for other religions.

The recent report made the question about salvation very specific. Those who affirmed ways to salvation other than through Christ were immediately asked to explain what they meant. The vast majority then specified “Jews, Muslims, Hindus, atheists or people with no religion at all” as religions or beliefs that lead to salvation.

## ‘Serious decline in confidence in the Gospel’

“This survey cannot easily be dismissed,” says J. Albert Mohler, President of Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. “The specificity of the responses and the quality of the research sample indicate that we face a serious decline in confidence in the Gospel. When 34 per cent of white evangelicals reject

the truth that Jesus is the only Savior, we are witnessing a virtual collapse of evangelical theology.”



Mohler

one third (30 per cent) said salvation comes through belief in Jesus, God or a higher power alone; and 10 per cent said salvation is in a combination of behavior and belief.

Mohler told *USA Today* that the findings reveal “a theological crisis for American evangelicals. They represent at best a misunderstanding of the Gospel and at worst a repudiation of the Gospel.” He sees two causes: bad preaching and the strong influence of secularism in society.

These views are “an indictment of

Mohler says the report reveals additional cause for concern because the survey also found that almost one third of Christians (29 per cent) said that salvation is achieved via our good works. Barely

evangelicalism and evangelical preaching,” Mohler wrote in his blog on Dec. 18: “Much of this confusion can be traced to the superficiality that marks far too many evangelical pulpits. The disappearance of doctrinal understanding and evangelical demonstration can be traced directly to the decline in expository preaching and doctrinal instruction. A loss of evangelistic and missionary commitment can be fully expected as a direct result of this confusion or repudiation of the Gospel.... The clear Biblical teaching is that Jesus Christ proclaimed himself to be the only way to salvation.”

Behind these statistics is also “the impact of pluralism and secularism in U.S. society,” said Mohler, “and the challenge of facing family and friends with ‘an uncomfortable truth’ — that unless one turns to Christ and repents he or she will face God’s judgment.”

Mohler ended his blog entry writing, “This new survey should be received with great concern.” Then he asked a pointed question: “Will it awaken today’s generation of evangelicals to the catastrophe before our eyes?”

# Authorities destroy new church building in Vietnam

Persecution still a reality for Vietnamese Christians

HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM (CDN) — Late last month local government officials in Vietnam made good on their threat to destroy a new wooden church building erected in September by Hmong Christians in Cu Hat village.

At 7:00 in the morning a large contingent of government officials, police and demolition workers arrived at the site of a Vietnam Good News Mission and Church in Cu Dram Commune in Dak Lak Province. By 8:30 the building was razed. Police wielding electric cattle prods beat back hundreds of distraught Christians who rushed to the site to protect the building.

Five injured people were taken away in an emergency vehicle authorities had brought to the scene. The injured included a child who suffered a broken arm and a pregnant woman who fainted after being poked in the stomach with an electric cattle prod. Villagers said they fear she may miscarry.

By day’s end one badly injured woman had not yet been returned to the village, and authorities would not divulge where she was.

One sad church leader said that the demolition of the church just before Christmas showed the heartlessness of officials toward Christian believers. “They think no one will notice or do anything about what they do in a remote area,” he said.

## Long journey ends painfully

Nearly eight years ago a congregation numbering more than 500 Hmong Christians had joined thousands of others

fleeing persecution in Vietnam’s northwest provinces, migrating to the central highlands. They aspired to construct a church building so they could worship protected from the rain and sun.

In September those Christians were finally able to assemble materials needed to erect a 12-meter by 20-meter church building large enough for them to meet. Eventually they were able to put a durable tile roof on the building, and with great joy they began worshipping together in that single location.

Although virtually all buildings in this area of Vietnam are erected without building permits, local authorities accused the Christians of “illegal construction” and ordered the congregation to “voluntarily” tear it down. On December 2, Krong Bong district officials made a formal decision to demolish the church within two weeks if the Christians would not do so themselves.

The Vietnam Good News Mission and Church is an organization that for more than a year has tried to register more than a hundred of its congregations without any success. Contrary to Vietnam’s new religion legislation, these requests for registration have either been denied or ignored.

## Agony and ecstasy

In contrast to this hostility toward ethnic minority Christians in a remote area, several Ho Chi Minh City congregations of the legally-recognized Evangelical Church of Vietnam (South) on December 12-13 were allowed to hold a large Christmas celebration in a soccer stadium.



An estimated 10,000 attended on each night of the event. The program, which featured a popular Vietnamese entertainer who recently came to faith in Christ, an American soloist and Korean and Chinese choirs, included an evangelistic invitation to which hundreds responded.

In a country where Christians have suffered under communist attitudes and actions against them for more than 30 years, many Vietnamese Christians were ecstatic that such an event could take place.

Likewise, in Pleiku in Gia Lai Province in mid-October, some 20,000 Jarai ethnic minority Christians gathered to hold an unprecedented celebration of the 65th anniversary of the coming of the gospel to their people. They had sought permission for more than a year, but it was granted only four days before the event. Participants said they suspected officials granted permission chiefly because several high-profile U.S. visitors made it clear they would attend.

On the other hand, authorities have worked to limit the spread of Christianity

to new areas. In a remote commune of Lao Cai Province, officials pressured new Hmong Christians to recant their new faith and re-establish their ancestral altars. Also, Christians in Dien Bien Province are trying to verify recent reports of the torching of Christian homes in the area.

Vietnam’s large Catholic Church was also reawakened to authorities’ residual hostility toward Christianity this year, with the government reacting violently to sustained but peaceful pressure by thousands to recover church land and buildings confiscated by authorities after the prime minister had agreed to negotiations.

## Thugs ‘discouraging’

Vietnam gave unusually light, house-arrest sentences to eight Catholics arrested during the prayer vigils-cum-protests. Previously others arrested for similar reasons have been sentenced to prison for years.

“Unfortunately, the mostly urban bright spots are cancelled by the persistence of old-style repression among Vietnam’s ethnic minorities in remote areas,” said one veteran Vietnam observer. “The easier registration of churches promised in 2005 is being granted very selectively and is used as a means of limiting and controlling Christianity.”

That central government authorities responsible for implementing “improved religion policy” seem to turn a blind eye to old-fashioned thugs at the local level, he added, “is very discouraging to Vietnam’s Christians. Religious freedom reserved for some is not religious freedom.”



## Church

# Prominent National Association of Evangelicals leader resigns amidst controversy

Marian Van Til, with files from CT, NAE, RT

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The high-profile vice-president for governmental affairs of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) resigned on December 10, 2008. The Christian Reformed Church in North America is one of the 60 denominations and 45,000 parishes that are members of the NAE.

Richard Cizik resigned after controversy erupted over his admission that he had come to favour same-sex unions. Cizik made the admission in a December 2 interview on National Public Radio in the U.S.

He was asked by public radio's Terry Gross, "A couple of years ago when you were on our show, I asked you if you were changing your mind on that. And two years ago, you said you were still opposed to gay marriage. But now as you identify more with younger voters, would you say you have changed on gay marriage?"

Cizik answered, "I'm shifting, I have to admit. In other words, I would willingly say that I believe in civil unions. I don't officially support redefining marriage from its traditional definition, I don't think."

In supporting civil unions and in seeming ambivalent about "gay marriage," Cizik was not upholding the NAE's position, much less the Bible, his critics argued. In 2004



the NAE published "For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Public Engagement." It defines marriage as between a man and a woman. It also says, "Good family life is so important to healthy human functioning that we oppose government efforts to trespass on its territory: whether by encroaching on parental responsibilities to educate their children, by treating other kinds of households as the family's social and legal equivalent, or by creating economic disincentives to marriage."

### Last straw

Cizik's radio interview got the phones ringing in NAE headquarters. It was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. Last year two dozen other prominent evangelicals attempted to oust Cizik from the NAE over what they called his "relentless campaign" regarding global warming. (Cizik accepts the view that global warming is a human-induced phenomenon, which a sizeable number of evangelicals do not accept.) Cizik also made waves among

evangelicals when he argued that a political candidate's favouring of abortion shouldn't be the determining issue in voting for him or her.

Cizik came to national and international attention because of his environmentalism. That is the major reason that *Time* magazine named him among the 100 most influential people in America in 2008; and why *Time* perceived Cizik as an atypical evangelical.

### 'Polarizing figure'

After Cizik's public radio interview and the outcry it caused, he backtracked. However, NAE president Leith Anderson told the organization's board members in a letter, that although Cizik "subsequently expressed regret, apologized, and affirmed our values, there is a loss of trust in his credibility as a spokesperson among leaders and constituencies."

Charles Colson of Prison Fellowship was asked his view of the matter. Colson told *Christianity Today*, "For better or for worse, Rich became a great, polarizing figure. He was gradually, over a period of time, separating himself from the mainstream of evangelical belief and conviction. So I'm not surprised. I'm sorry for him, but I'm not disappointed for the evangelical movement."

## Disaffected Anglicans form new church

WHEATON, Illinois (Crosswalk.com) — Wondering what all the fuss in the Anglican/Episcopal Church is all about?

In a nutshell, says Rev. Peter Frank, director of communications for the Anglican Communion Network, "It is over competing views about who God is, who Jesus is, and what we are going to do about it."

According to Frank and other disaffected Anglicans, the Anglican Church has lost its theological and traditional footing by forgetting who they are and what they believe. Some within the denominational hierarchy have strayed so far in their theological views as to propose — incredibly — a religion without God.

While there have long been voices within the Anglican Church calling for a return to foundational principles, the Common Cause Partnership is the first to unite those voices into a cohesive body.

With the Common Cause Partnership acting as midwife, on December 3, 2008, the new Anglican Church in North America was born. At a news conference and worship service at the Wheaton Evangelical Free Church in suburban Chicago,

bishops, clergy and lay leaders from the United States and Canada unveiled a provisional constitution and the first set of canons.

The new movement unites 700 orthodox and breakaway Anglican congregations, representing roughly 100,000 members. Some within the leadership believe the movement will eventually be recognized as a province — the Anglican term for the church's largest regional jurisdiction — by many of the world's Anglican leaders.

"The purpose of this province is to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ and his transforming love in the United States, Canada and beyond," said Bishop Robert Duncan of Pittsburgh, moderator of the Common Cause Partnership.

Frank says that the new organization has received a letter of support from seven archbishops as well as other primates in the Anglican union.

The archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, has left open the doors of communications as well. But, said Frank, it remains to be seen how the relationship between the new Anglican Church in North America and the old hierarchy develops.

## Church + two parents = fewer child behavior problems, says study

WASHINGTON, D.C. (FRC) — A new study from the "Mapping America" project, co-released by more than 30 state family policy councils in the U.S., finds that children have fewer problems at school and home when they live with both biological parents and frequently attend religious services.

Dr. Nicholas Zill, the founding president of Child Trends, and Dr. Philip Fletcher, a research psychologist at Westat, co-authored the new study, which analyzes data from the National Survey of Children's Health.

Among their remarkable findings: children not living with both parents and not attending services regularly are *five times* less likely to repeat a grade. Thirty-four percent of such children had repeated a grade, compared with six percent of children in intact families who go to church regularly. And 53 percent of the former group — versus 21 percent of the latter — had their parents contacted by the school because of conduct or achievement problems the youth was having at school.

Children with two religiously observant parents (who take them to services) are also less likely to have behavior problems

at home and school, and are more likely to be co-operative and understanding of others' feelings. Parents of these children report less stress, healthier parent-child relationships, and fewer concerns about their children's achievement.

These differences hold up even after controlling for family income and poverty, low parent education levels, and race and ethnicity.

Despite the developmental advantages associated with an intact two-parent family and religious training, the survey shows that nowadays less than half of all American children between 6 and 17 years of age — 45 per cent — live with both biological parents and attend religious services weekly or monthly. Another 30 per cent attend religious services regularly but live with one parent only, with one parent and a stepparent, or with foster parents or other relatives. Still another 13 per cent live with both parents but attend religious services infrequently or not at all. And 12 per cent are not living with both parents *and* not attending church, synagogue, or mosque regularly.

## 'Pray for Parliament' urges Evangelical Fellowship of Canada



Marian Van Til

"With Parliament suspended until late [January] amid political uncertainty and a serious global economic crisis, what can you do?" asks the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC).

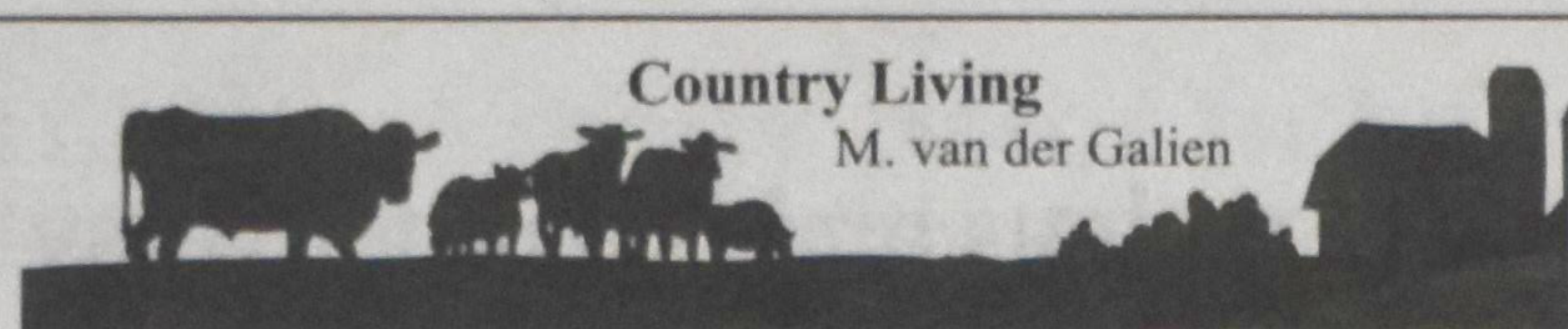
"Pray for Parliament" is the fellowship's first and crucial answer. And the EFC and its affiliates have provided resources for Canadian Christians to do just that, available on the EFC's website ([www.evangelicalfellowship.ca](http://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca)).

The EFC urges prayer "for the leaders of Canada's national political parties that good governance will be their focus"; "for Canada and the world's economies that serious depression will be averted"; "for Canadians, that people of faith will join in prayer and encourage a new atmosphere of civility in Parliament and in Canada generally"; and "for God's will to be done in this situation as it is in heaven."

The fellowship also suggests that Christians (and all Canadians) contact their MPs and other political leaders expressing their viewpoints on current concerns, including regarding Parliament itself and its leadership or lack thereof. In addition, in an open letter to "Parliamentarians and Fellow Canadians" (also readable on EFC's website), the group's president, Bruce J. Clemenger, issued and spelled out a plea for civility, integrity, statesmanship and grace.



## Leisure/Work



## When kids and men were rough, tough and brave

I read four very interesting books during the Christmas season. *Run of the Town* tells of a young man's life experiences growing up in the northern Ontario town of Hearst. The collection of short stories takes place between 1940 and 1960. Author Terrence West taught me one year (1964) at Eganville and District High School.

I enjoyed *The Pioneer Years 1895 - 1914*. Author Barry Broadfoot researched this era collecting data from hundreds of personal interviews on those early settlers. It's a collection of wonderful real-life stories. The book also deals with the tremendous hardships that the settlers had to deal with - cold, cold winters, isolation, loneliness, adjusting to pioneer life and dealing with the huge swarms of mosquitoes in the spring and summer.

A woman who was interviewed said the influenza was very bad some years and a lot of people died. But you never heard too much of the children dying. Children seemed hardy, these children from big families. They seemed to survive better. They were hardy and strong in those days.

I think most people will agree that we don't have to go all the way back to 1908 to know that kids were tough in those days. Kids were tough when I went to school. But they were also kind and helpful. I don't recall anybody ever being labeled as a bully. We all got along. It was like a big happy family. We weren't pampered and fussed over. We spent a lot of time outdoors and we were healthy. Kids seldom missed school because they caught a bad bug that was passed throughout the school.

And there were no "snow days" when my generation went to school in the 1950s and 1960s. The buses ran every school day. The country roads were muddy for a few weeks in the spring when all those huge snow banks melted. If the road was too muddy our bus driver would let the kids off and they'd have to walk the rest of the way. He didn't want to make the ruts any deeper. Buses were never cancelled.

If the regular bus driver couldn't make it back on time (he was also an electrician), the principal would get the school's custodian to drive the bus. He was an elderly man and was hard of hearing. The Grade-8 farm boys often had to remind him to "put it in high" as we'd roar along the winding country road in second or third gear.

The Grade 8 kids in the public school I went to in Eganville would sometimes be asked to supervise the younger classes at noon hour so that the teacher could have a lunch break with the fellow teachers. I recall supervising the Grade 2 and 3 classes on many occasions. Some farm kids had a glass jar of milk in their lunch kit. The raw milk sat in their lunch box on top of the coat closet all morning. There was no such thing as a refrigerator in the schools. Kids ate homemade slices of bread with farm-slaughtered meat and drank the luke-warm unpasteurized milk. They were healthy because that's what they were brought up with. There was no such thing as food allergies or asthma.

It's good to see kids playing hockey and sliding down hills getting into rough and tumble play like their grandparents did. They have good fun in the great outdoors!

I read *D-Day, Juno Beach, Canada's 24 Hours of Destiny* written by Lance Goddard. It's a fascinating book full of photos and it tells in detail the sacrifices made by the many young Canadian soldiers. These brave, courageous men began the liberation of Europe.

It wasn't only rough and tough stuff - they went through horrific experiences.

Now I'm reading *Through Footless Halls of Air*. Author Floyd Williston researched the short lives of six Canadian airmen, two of them, Williston's brothers, who failed to return from aerial operations during the Second World War.

All four books taught me something...how lucky we are today...even with the world's economy in tatters.

Maynard van der Galien runs a farm in the Ottawa Valley at Renfrew, Ont. (Maynard@renfrew.net)



## Luther and work: integrating Sunday and Monday (Part II)

Bert den Boggende

Luther's contribution to the understanding of work constituted a break with the understandings of the Middle Ages. Two aspects of Luther's thought need to be considered here: his view of creation and his view of the priesthood of all believers which begins at baptism.

### Work and creation

God's creation was good, and since God commissioned work it also must be good. God also continued his creational work, using people as his co-workers to care for that creation. In his exposition of Genesis 31:3, Luther remarked that "God's people please God even in the least and most trifling matters. For He will be working all things through you; He will milk the cow through you and perform the most servile duties through you, and all the greatest and least duties alike will be pleasing to Him." As the *Large Catechism* has it, "Creatures are only the hands, channels, and means through which God bestows all blessings."

### The Priesthood of believers

The priesthood of all believers is often interpreted as the abolition of an intermediary between God and the human being. But that is only partly what Luther had in mind. He certainly did not imply that everyone now had a liturgical function. Rather, he meant that this priesthood had a function towards the neighbour. Time and again Luther emphasized work as servanthood. This community-enhancing notion of work conflicts with our contemporary individualism. It was radical for his time, and, I would suggest, it is still revolutionary even though the context has changed.

### Luther's writings on work

Unlike his pamphlets and sermons about usury, Luther did not write much about work. Perusing volume 55, the index to *Luther's Works*, indicates that "labour," "callings," "idleness," and "sloth" are mentioned on about one percent of the about 20,000 pages. Many of these entries are without significance or short and scattered over the 54 volumes. Although there is no sustained discussion, it is clear that Luther recognized the importance and dignity of a believer's paid or unpaid daily labour. He regarded it as a service directed at the neighbour and not to God, and thus it belonged to this world and not to heaven. Yet, it was also a commitment to Christ and a way to serve God. Through such labour the Christian represented the church to the world.

In *The Pagan Servitude of the Church*, commonly known as *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, an important and lengthy essay dated 1520, Luther asserted that every baptized person had a calling from God. In a paragraph about the glory of baptism he commented about the works of priests and monks: "however numerous, sacred, and arduous they may be, these works, in God's sight, are in no way whatever superior to the works of a farmer labouring in the field, or of a woman looking after her home. Rather, all are measured by Him by faith alone....Indeed, it occurs quite frequently that the common work of a serving man or a maid is more acceptable than all

the fastings and other works of monks and priests where faith is lacking." Elsewhere he stated that "All estates and works of God are to be praised as highly as they can be and none despised in favor of another." And in a 1534 sermon he said that the vocation of baptized parents was

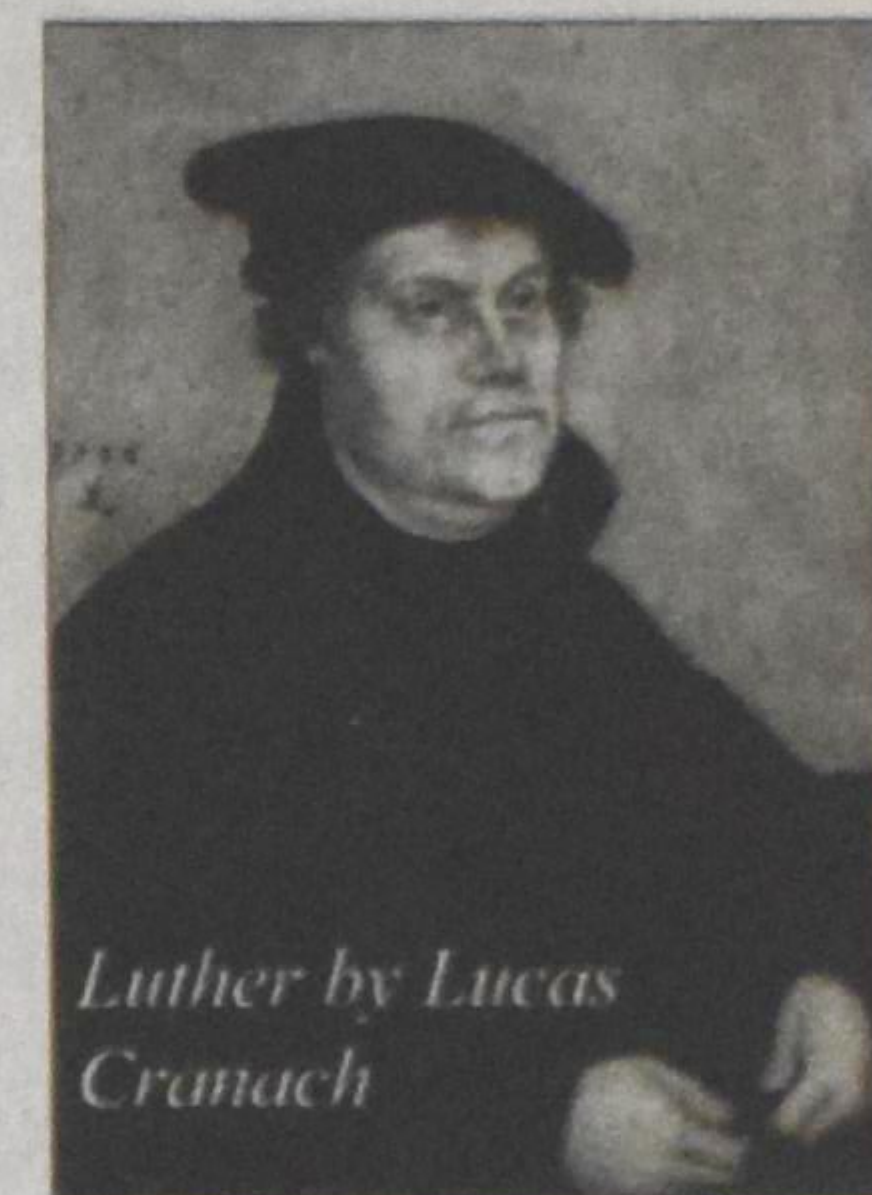
to be a holy father and a holy mother, caring for their children, praying for them, disciplining them, running a household, preparing meals: "These things are none other than holy works to which you have been called." They were as holy as the preaching vocation he himself had.

In explaining Genesis 17:9, he commented that every person had a calling. Thus, "a king serves God when he is at pains to look after and govern his people. So do the mother of a household when she tends her baby, the father of a household when he gains a livelihood by working, and a pupil when he applies himself diligently to his studies." For Luther it was in the diligently done daily work, whatever the mundane tasks, that God gave the baptized person an opportunity to honour and thank him and respond to Christ's saving activity. Moreover, such work done in faithfulness gave purpose and meaning to life and contributed to the well-being of individuals and the community. In the process, such work advanced God's intention for humanity.

### Alike in dignity

By giving dignity to the work of all Christians, Luther downgraded that of the clergy. In that process he also erased the distinction between the spiritual and temporal estates. In another important and lengthy essay, *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, also dating from 1520, he bluntly stated, "It is a pure invention that pope, bishop, priests, and monks are called the spiritual estate while princes, lords, artisans, and farmers are called the temporal estate. This is indeed a piece of deceit and hypocrisy...all Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them except that of office." Somewhat later he posited that "if you are a manual laborer, you find that the Bible has been put into your workshop, into your hand. It teaches and preaches how you should treat your neighbor. Just look at your tools - at your needle or thimble, your beer barrel, your goods, your scales or yardsticks or measure - and you will read this statement inscribed on them.... You have as many preachers as you have transactions, goods, tools, and other equipment in your house and home. All this is continually crying out to you: 'Friend, use me in your relations with your neighbor just as you would want your neighbor to use his property in his relations with you'."

This erasure of distinction did not mean that all were now equal. Equality only existed in the spiritual kingdom. It would be quite mistaken to turn Christ's spiritual kingdom into an external worldly one. "Impossible!" Luther cried, "an earthly kingdom cannot exist without inequality



Luther by Lucas Cranach



## Leisure/Work

of persons. Some must be free, others serfs, some rulers, others subjects." Like other medieval authors, he regarded serfdom as a necessary foundation of society. Without it, society would experience anarchy, a problem he saw in the 1525 peasant revolt. Thus, he preferred people remain in their station.

He commented approvingly of Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 7:20-24, which reads in part: "Let each of you remain in the condition in which you were called....Do not be concerned about it....In whatever condition you were called, brothers and sisters, there remain with God." Like Paul, Luther was interested in a life of service: "All stations are so oriented that they serve others." Therefore, this service did not require change of work (unless contrary to God's commands) and did not depend on externalities. Commenting on Genesis 16, he remarked that "no one should change his position in life because of his own judgment or desire. God will change it either through death or because of the desire and judgment of those who are your superiors. If this does not happen, those who give up their vocations commit a sin."

But remaining in an unpleasant work situation did not need to lead to despair: "God hears that you resent being a maidservant and a slave, and that you have nothing of your own. But He has regarded your unhappy state and wants to bless you. Therefore be of good cheer, and do not despair." A year before his death in 1545, he gave a good clue to his position: "Beware of over-reaching....Rather say, 'O God, heavenly Father, defend me against haughtiness'."

## Service and joy

Luther, like the apostle, expected that the millennium would soon be inaugurated, which may help explain why he was not overly concerned about a person's station. That he was not against changing station is evident from his own experience. He certainly did not go as far as Calvinism, but he prepared the way for the Protestant work ethic. Unfortunately, in its 21st century disguise, that work ethic has largely ignored Luther's context of service to God and neighbour.

Daily work was the route to saintliness. Expounding Gen. 20:2-3, he wrote that "we should seek no other saintliness through extraordinary works outside our calling." God sometimes called people to do extraordinary things, but if that did not happen, "let everyone nevertheless rejoice that he is in a divine calling when he assumes and performs these ordinary duties of this life."

Not only did Luther give dignity to daily work, he also suggested joy, although the work might be dreary. In his *Large Catechism* he remarked, "If this could be impressed on the poor people, a servant

girl would dance for joy and praise and thank God; and with her careful work, for which she receives sustenance and wages, she would obtain a treasure such as those who are regarded as the greatest saints do not have." Such dignity and joy may seem difficult to attain in many industrial plants, but what Luther was getting at was attitude. Whatever the activity, our work attitude would determine our relationship to God and neighbour. That relationship was intricately intertwined: "If only everyone would regard their service to their neighbours as service to God, the whole world would be filled with 'God-service' [German: *Gottesdienst*]. A servant in the stable, a maid in the kitchen, a child in school – these are merely God's workers and God's servants." With work a means of glorifying God, it could not be an end in itself.

Some work could entail hardship. For Christians, faithfully fulfilling such tasks would be experiencing a form of bearing the cross. Luther's view of the cross is too great to be discussed here, but it may be pointed out that work hardship could be God's way of disciplining the Christian to deny him or herself.

From this survey, it is apparent that Luther was at the same time a radical and a conservative. Like Mackenzie King, for whom the community was one of the four components in industrial relations, Luther also emphasized the community. Unlike King, he regarded work as a means to serve others. Work could never be all-consuming. Its meaning could only be found in the extent to which work drives us back to the ultimate source of meaning – our relationship with Christ.

## Notes:

The Luther bibliography is vast. Indispensable are the 54 volumes (plus index volume) of Luther's collected works: Martin Luther, *Luther's Works* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961). For usury, see *Long Sermon on Usury*, 1520, and *On Trade and Usury*, 1534. D. Michael Bennethum, *Listen! God is Calling! Luther Speaks of Vocation, Faith, and Work* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003) is a very useful booklet. Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, tr. Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957) places Luther's idea about vocation in Luther's theological context. R.H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1962 [1926]) provides a historical perspective. Although not dealing with Luther, Laura Nash and Scotty McLennan, *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday: The Challenge of Fusing Christian Values with Business Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), delineate the present disconnect.

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## Intangible Things

Heidi VanderSlikke

## Bound for glory

Ask Jack what his least favourite day of the week is and the answer comes without hesitation: Monday. I'm more optimistic. After all, Monday begins a brand new work week, chock full of potential. At least, that's what I told myself a couple of weeks ago on a dreary Monday morning.

I got up early to read my Bible and pray. I asked God to align my priorities with his, to help me spend my time in a way that brought him glory. I poured a cup of coffee and pictured a well-ordered day ahead. Perhaps I could finish last week's incomplete tasks in the morning and deal with my cluttered desk after lunch.

I stared out the kitchen window at the snow-laden roofs of our farm. Jack knocked down snow each day as best he could, but it still hung perilously over the edges of the buildings, like frozen waves, defying gravity – for now. The wind whipped sheets of rain across the icy yard.

Jack poked his head in the door. "Can you help me?" he said. "The snow is blocking the eaves troughs and the rain is streaming alongside of the barn. The middle section of the bottom floor is flooded."

I stepped gingerly across the yard, thinking I should have worn skates instead

Prince Farming, with his bad back, could keep going. Then I wondered why God hadn't sent him a suitable helpmate with bigger biceps.

At last a large section of the floor was clean down to the cement. After a coffee break we put down new straw. With chickens in the barn, we had to break and shake by hand, the old-fashioned way.

Jack grabbed a bale and snapped it forcefully, breaking the twine. "Here's what you do," he said, as he thrust his pitchfork into a wad of straw, then shook it vigorously, scattering bedding over several square feet.

I stabbed my fork into a bale and pulled it up empty.

"No, no. Do it like you mean it," he said, demonstrating again.

With my version of a fierce grunt, I jabbed again and came up with half as much straw on the fork as what Jack had. It was better than nothing.

"Good job," he said, "Keep going."

I chanted like men in a chain gang I'd seen in the movies.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"Making power noises," I said, "It really helps." We laughed. About the time my arms threatened to fall off, we were done.

An hour later I was all cleaned up, but there was no sign of Jack in the house. Then he appeared at the door, an unhappy look on his face. "I need you out there again. The drinker line snapped."

I tucked my freshly washed hair into a shower cap to keep the chicken smell away and headed out to the barn for a second round of quality time with hubby. No wonder he dislikes Mondays.

That night I plunked down on the sofa beside Jack. "How are you doing?" I asked.

"My back is killing me," he said.

I showed him my blistered hands and he seemed duly impressed. Then his face grew serious, "Thanks for all your help today."

"They're my chickens, too," I said.

"Yeah, but it means a lot to have you work side by side with me, especially in the dirty jobs. It was a bad day, but you made it brighter."

I went to the kitchen to get him a Tylenol and thought again of my morning prayer. Sometimes God sends answers in the most unexpected ways.

Who knew that shoveling sopping wet manure could be such a glory job?

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of boots. A sudden gust of wind propelled me backward. I couldn't stand still, let alone get traction to go forward. I giggled nervously and hoped this wouldn't end with me flat on my back.

When I finally made it to the barn the chickens had moved away from the flood zone. What a mess. Jack pushed the sodden manure to the door with a snow shovel and I scooped it from there into the bucket of the tractor.

Dirty water swirled around my feet and wet dung splattered back at me when I shoveled it into the loader. I thought of my prayer about spending time to God's glory and grinned. But the pull in my back muscles wasn't so funny. We pushed, scooped and leaned on our shovels every few minutes to rest. I wondered how long



## Memoirs

## Journal of a Dutch immigrant (Part II)

Francis Ruiter of Edmonton has published his memoirs, *Journal of a Dutch Immigrant*. We have decided to publish three excerpts. In this second excerpt, Ruiter describes how he worked at a sawmill in northern British Columbia.

## Francis Ruiter

After moving to British Columbia, Canada, from the Netherlands in 1948 with my two cousins, Pete and John, I lived with my Uncle Peter and worked on his farm for most of the year. After the harvest, forestry was the only other employment. In our first year in B.C., Pete and I found winter work at H. Hagman's Sawmill about five miles from Uncle Peter's farmhouse.

Our camp consisted of a cookhouse surrounded by the small cabins of the mill and bush workers. Our cabin was just big enough for two single beds with a small table between. We slept in sleeping bags on mouldy, smelly mattresses, and old pillows that most cats would avoid. The outside walls and roof were covered with tarpaper, but there was no insulation on the inside, so only the constant feeding of the airtight wood-burning heater could keep the room warmer than the outside.

It took about five men to operate the mill. The canter would roll the log onto the carrier, a track that moved the log past a large circular saw, which was run by the sawyer. The first cut off the log, the outer bark of the tree, was called a slab. My job as the slab packer was to carry this waste to the nearby burning pile. The trimmer's job was to cut the ends off each board to square it, and then cut it to its proper length of 12, 14, or 16 feet. Then the lumber packer – the position cousin Peter first had – would pile the lumber in 8-foot-wide piles. The packed boards would be hauled by trucks down the mountain roads to the planing mill in Houston.

This experience, beyond being an eye-opener to the way in which lumber was prepared, proved to be an ear-opener as well. Eating lunch with the other workers, we were quickly initiated into very rough language. The men's vocabulary would redden our ears. We were still just learning English, but it wasn't long before we adopted some of those words ourselves. A

few months into the job, a log fell on my toes and I yelled out a few choice expletives. I hadn't even known I could pronounce these words! Yet I did not hear a disapproving

Francis Ruiter reading at the Blue Chair Café



thunderclap from above, and so I went on with my work.

## A weekly commute to town

On weekends we went to our respective homes, often by riding with a trucker carrying lumber to Houston. In town we would spend a few hours visiting with friends and shopping for sweets and tobacco.

On Sundays we would attend church twice with our respective host families. On Sunday evenings we went to Young People's Society meetings for some Bible study, singing, and maybe a game. This was also an opportunity to meet girls – possible future dates. By 9:00 p.m. we would be back on our way to bush camp. We would arrive at our camp close to midnight, make a quick fire, and crawl into our sleeping bags for the six hours before the breakfast gong sounded.

One time the following year, I came to camp on a Sunday evening by myself when it was -40° C. It was scary, being alone in the dark and bitter cold. I could freeze or have an accident lighting a fire. Aware that one mistake could cost me my life, I had to stop and think what to do first. I had to be careful not to touch any metal with my bare hands; it could tear the skin off my fingers. The lantern was too cold to handle, so I needed to make a fire first. I lifted the lid of the stove with a stick, threw in some wood, and splashed diesel fuel on it. Next, I took my mitten off, lit a piece of paper with a match and threw it into the stove. Carrying the lantern with a stick of wood, I put it on the stove to warm for a little while until I could use my bare hands to lift and light it. The cold was a problem during the day too. When the temperature got lower than -30°C, we could not work because the saw teeth might snap off and wound someone, and other metal equipment might crack.

## Initiation at the second mill

I was fired near the end of that first winter for talking back to Mr. Hagman. The next

winter I got a job with Pete Dieleman, who was building a sawmill that was more modern than Hagman's. My first assignment was to bring two horses from Houston up to the lumber mill camp. After spending a whole summer roaming free on uninhabited land, they were not in the mood to be put back to work. All went well for a mile or so, but suddenly the friskier of the two horses sensed

he was going in the wrong direction – away from his former range – and stopped. I got off my horse and thought that if I walked ahead holding on to the rope, the horses would follow. Neither one did. At this point, we still had more than 10 miles to go. I tried subterfuge. Turning them around, I backtracked a few yards, then turned around again. They would go for a bit, then stop again. I used my trick several times, but they were getting smarter. I needed to do something different.

Then the rope slipped out of my hands and the frisky horse took off, trotting in the other direction. Luckily, a car was coming our way and the driver stopped in the middle of the road, and, getting out of his car, spread his arms wide to corner the horse. Once it was in reach, he grabbed the rope dangling from the halter.

I tied the two horses together and cut a branch from a nearby tree. By dangling the branch with its leaves brushing over their backsides, I kept them at a brisk walk. We arrived at the bush camp six hours after leaving Houston. I stabled the horses and, even though I didn't think they deserved it, gave them some hay. The fellows at camp laughed and joked about my ordeal, but I knew I had earned their respect by getting the job done.

## Dangerous work

The new sawmill had been built in the middle of a virgin forest, and the site was not quite ready. The trees around the mill had to be cut first. I was assigned to help the man who felled the trees, many of which were as big as 4 feet in diameter and 75 feet tall. This required a two-man chain saw, which had a longer blade than the smaller one-man saw. The tree feller held the heavier side of the chainsaw and controlled the speed and tilt. The helper held onto the handle attached to the end of the blade and stood in a position in extension of the blade. Having not received any instruction, I did not know where to stand, so I stood behind the blade and pulled

it toward me. The chainsaw cut through the tree as expected. But it also chewed through my coveralls, pants, and long johns just above my knee. The operator hollered and stopped the engine, expecting blood to come spurting out of my leg. Maybe a few hairs were cut, but the blade didn't break the skin. Still, I was shocked and frightened enough that I quit for the day.

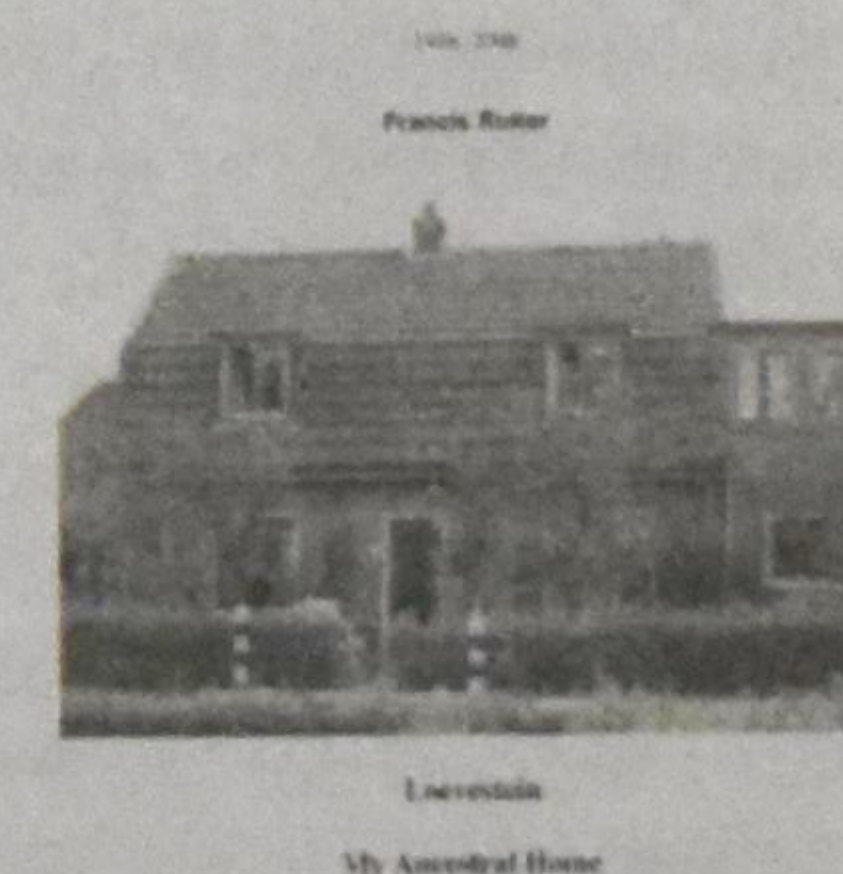
Some days later I was put to skidding logs – using a horse to drag the felled trees to the loading area so they could be trucked to the mill site. I chose to use the frisky horse who had tried to escape me before: we shared an impatient temperament, but I also wanted to show him who was boss. He gave me no problems, though.

Once the mill was operational, I was trained as an edger operator. The edger is the second set of saws after the main saw has sliced the tree into planks. I would estimate by eye the width of the plank, set the saws to the proper widths, and gently push the plank through, cutting the bark off either side. I enjoyed this work and was good at it. I had a sharp eye for getting the most out of a rough-cut plank and got along with the foreman who later trained me to operate the main saw.

I would return to my uncle's farm for one more summer. In the spring of 1950, I moved to Vancouver to see what that city had to offer.

(Concluded in the January 26 issue)

## Journal of a Dutch Immigrant



Author Donna Dawson writes: "Francis Ruiter allowed me to see through his eyes, the Holland of the war years, a simpler more beautiful life where family was centred around a love of God. In his brusque and tongue-in-cheek way, Francis has opened a wonderful door to the past for future generations."

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## University/Career

# Pluck the day

Natalie Armstrong

When I graduated from university, I was working at a high school and coaching varsity basketball. Almost every day, it seemed as though I would overhear things like “When I’m out of high school...” or “Next year, I’m going to....” I found myself responding with lines like “Enjoy your time here,” which probably sounded like a cliché to them. But that advice is sound. In every stage of life, we want to be at the next one, and so we often miss out on the present.

When we are kids, we want to be old enough to drive, date, go to certain movies, or stay out late. When we are teenagers, we can’t wait to move out. When we are in college, we want to be done school. When we are done school, we want to be students again or moving on to the next stage. You may believe it ends there, but it doesn’t.

People in the working world want to change jobs. Young married couples want to get their families started and have kids. Young couples with kids want their kids to grow older so they can reclaim some of their time. Thirty-somethings want to be retired. Older couples want to be grandparents. Retirees long to work again. The pattern doesn’t end.

There is nothing wrong with looking forward to the next step or looking back fondly



on the past, but the reality is that we live in the present. University taught me that it’s okay to dream. In fact, dreaming is a fantastic way to set goals and motivate yourself. However, if you dream your undergrad years away you will miss out on some incredible experiences. You won’t enjoy your classes, professors, or dorm life.

In the movie *Garden State* there is a sequence where Mark leads the main character Andrew Largeman and Andrew’s new girlfriend, Sam, around all day in search for a gift for Andrew, but with no hint as to where

they are going or why. At one point, Andrew blurts out that he can’t take it anymore and wants to just give up, but Mark doesn’t want to ruin the surprise. In an odd way, this is the first point in the movie that Andrew learns to live in the present without being depressed or numbed by medication.

Shortly after that confrontation, Andrew, Sam, and Mark climb on top of a large piece of machinery so that they can stare down into a deep chasm that they refer to as “the infinite abyss.” In the pouring rain they scream into the cavern to hear the echo rebound deep in-

side. They laugh and Sam and Andrew share a kiss. They relish the moment. They succeed in enjoying the present.

Throughout the rest of the movie, Andrew feels more than he has in his whole life. He cries. He confronts his father. He reacts. He gets angry. He forgives. He experiences life.

Each of us is on a crazy, unique journey. My time in university taught me to enjoy every moment of life. Dream about the future, but don’t live in your dreams. Enjoy learning and getting to know your professors. Enjoy studying and staying up late writing papers. Enjoy being single. Enjoy dating. Eat Kraft dinner drowned in ketchup. Wear underwear inside out when you don’t have any clean ones – or maybe wash them instead. Have conversations with dorm-mates about life changing things at 4 a.m. And even though you may be staring down the infinite abyss, know that you can scream fearlessly into it.

*Natalie Armstrong graduated from Redeemer University College in 2007.*

*She is currently pursuing a Master of Divinity degree at McMaster University and is active in youth ministry at The Meeting House in Oakville, Ontario.*

**Note:** This is the first of a series of articles written by university graduates.



## Technically Speaking

Derek Schuurman

Technology has been a common theme in my life starting already in my youth. I grew up in the Toronto suburb of Willowdale where I developed a growing fascination with the world of electronics. The passion began early with building crystal radios and a variety of other electronic projects.

As a teenager I became interested in Ham radio, fascinated by the notion that one could communicate with other Ham radio operators from exotic locations all over the globe. I still recall firing up my shortwave transmitter after earning my Ham license and nervously awaiting my first shortwave contact. I was expecting a rare distant station to respond, but to my disappointment my first shortwave contact ended up coming from Stouffville – a small town a short way from where I lived. I learned early on that technology can sometimes be disappointing.

Around this same time I began playing with one of the early generation of personal computers – the Sinclair ZX81. It came equipped with 1K of memory and an awkward membrane keyboard. An advertisement for the ZX81 claimed it would “put the power within your reach” and that it had “almost everything you could ask for in a personal computer.” Although I learned a lot from that early personal computer, I also grew to realize that claims made about computer technology

are not always reliable.

My interest in technology drew me to study at the University of Waterloo, the preferred place to study for those aspiring to be technical gurus. After graduating with a degree in Electrical Engineering, I felt confident I could tackle whatever technical challenges would come my way.

### In need of a context

I began work in a small high-tech company within walking distance of the University of Waterloo. However, it became apparent to me that my excellent technical training had lacked in providing me with a context and meaning for my work. More specifically, how could I integrate my faith with my work? Beyond witnessing to fellow employees or perhaps customers, how did my faith hold any relevance to the technical work that I did?

As a Reformed Christian, I was familiar with the notion that all of life falls under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and that we can serve him equally well as a minister or as a webmaster. However, as I found myself sitting in a cubicle-farm, I found it increasingly difficult to determine exactly what impact my day-to-day work had for the kingdom of God. It’s easy to say that faith informs all of life; but that notion becomes little more than a platitude without a more detailed understand-

ing of just what that means.

### Fearfully made

I began to read and think about this question and it continued to gnaw on me as I left work to pursue graduate studies in engineering. I went on to complete a Ph.D. at McMaster University in the area of robotics and computer vision. Many people see advances in robotics and artificial intelligence as evidence that technology will one day rescue humanity from all our problems. My studies in robotics and computer vision led me to a different and more humble conclusion: we are fearfully and wonderfully made and even the simplest tasks that we perform are incredibly hard to reproduce with a computer. I became convinced that the creation is much more complex than what can be described by a set of computer algorithms.

I had felt a call to teaching and was given the privilege of becoming an assistant professor of computer science at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario. I am thankful to God that he led me to a Christian academic community where the question of how to integrate faith and learning is taken as important and where people take seriously the call to take “every thought captive for Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). My hope for my students is that they will not only de-

velop a toolbox of technical skills, but that they will capture the vision of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ in the area of computing.

The Bible tells us that God has chosen the “time and place” in which we live (Acts 17:26). I am grateful that I was born in such exciting times! The first computer on a chip was invented a few years after I was born, and, as I grew, I was able to witness the introduction of some of the first personal computers (like my ZX81), the development of the Internet, and many other exciting technologies that have changed the world. Later in life, I was glad not only to observe these developments but also to have a front row seat and an opportunity to participate in contributing and shaping some small aspects of the new technology.

Technology has a great affect on our culture. Indeed, some might say that technology has become our culture. In future articles I hope to further explore some issues in computer technology and how faith can help inform them.

*Dr. Derek Schuurman teaches full-time in the Department of Computer Science at Redeemer University College. Derek and his wife Carina have 4 children and they live in Hamilton. E-mail: dschuurman@cs.redeemer.ca. Web: http://cs.redeemer.ca/derek/*

# Fearfully and wonderfully made



## Kuyper

# The living God in your midst (Part III)

Hereby you shall know that the  
living God is among you.

Joshua 3:10a

## Introduction to Part I:

The pure, undefiled mystical body of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth, the church, is a wonderful entity.

Nothing impure can enter it, and not one of God's children remains outside. It has the anointing of the Holy One and possesses all knowledge. All the powers of eternal life, and all the glory of the Kingdom are hidden within it. And there is no comfort on earth ever tasted by one of God's children, no lasting spiritual refreshment enjoyed by a pilgrim on the way to the new Jerusalem, but it flowed to them through the arteries of the holy body of our Lord....

## Christ and the Spirit

Reflect on this prayerfully, and what do you find?

We find that our precious Mediator, who was "very God in his innermost being", but who assumed our human nature in the unity of his person, was from eternity himself in true personal fellowship with God the Holy Spirit. Before the mountains were formed and the foundations of the depths of the earth were secured in immeasurable space, the Son was eternally in personal communion with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

One could not say of the Son that he should first receive the Holy Spirit. God the Son cannot receive any power from God the Holy Spirit, because he is equal with him in majesty and splendour. So also the Holy Spirit cannot abide in the Son, because the bond between the Son and the Holy Spirit is not one of indwelling, but of divine communion of being.

Nothing of God the Holy Spirit could ever be delegated to God the Son. Rather we must confess the opposite, that God the Holy Spirit issues forth from both the Father and the Son.

Thus we cannot say of God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, that he was filled with the Holy Spirit, received the Holy Spirit, or began to communicate with the Spirit, for to say so the Son would first have to stop being the Son of God.

We enter boldly into the holy of holies of this mystery, when we recognize that this Son took on our nature, and assumed this human nature in such a way that he truly became human.

This human Jesus is quite different from the Son of God, for as a human he was not in personal communion with the Father, nor with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not come to us from the human Jesus. And the Holy Spirit definitely was, and needed to be, poured out on the human Jesus.

We see the real depth of the mystery when we realize that it is very specifically the work of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, who inhabits our human heart as God, and who comfort us as God the Holy Spirit.

This means that God the Son did not dwell as God in the soul of the human Jesus Christ. In the incarnation, God the Son related in a miraculous way with human nature. The Holy Spirit is not united with humanity in the same way. But it was peculiarly the work of the Holy Spirit, not the Son, to enter any human soul as God, and thus also to enter the human soul of Jesus Christ.

This explains why the human Jesus Christ needed to receive the Holy Spirit even though he was the Son; why the Spirit poured out his power and energy on Jesus



The Descent of the Holy Spirit in a 15th century illuminated manuscript. Musée Condé, Chantilly. The Holy Spirit is depicted as a dove in the topmost area of painting.

and why Jesus became completely filled with the Spirit upon his return to Heaven, so that at Pentecost he could pour out this same Spirit upon the church, his Body.

## In God's womb

Once all this has become clear through prayer and meditation, then light will also suddenly surround you. It then becomes abundantly clear how the Holy Spirit, who lives in Christ as our Head and in us as his members, only began his divine work of comfort on Pentecost. Only from that hour did God the Holy Spirit, who was already indwelling the human person Jesus Christ, meet the Mediator, and all the limitations of his humble state were eliminated once and for all.

Now it is no longer a riddle how the Holy Spirit can work in me long before I notice it. We know that a baby can live in the mother's womb long before the child has any awareness of its own existence, although the mother is fully aware of it. This is also how things work in the mystical body of our Lord.

It is not about being alive or being aware of life, but rather about Jesus taking note of you. And when he does,

your life in this body will at first be like that of the child in the mother's womb. The force of life already flows through you even if you are not yet aware of it, just as the mother gives life to the unborn child. And there is more to it. You may have already noticed that the beauty of the gift of the Holy Spirit working to change the direction of your life is substantially different from the much deeper and wholly other matter of you becoming aware of the personal indwelling of God the Holy Spirit.

## The Spirit and us

God the Lord dwells within you by the power of the Spirit. This wonderful God, who holds even the highest heavens in his hand, enters into your unsearchable secret inner self. He sets up his throne in your heart, and surrounds your whole inner being and person with his heavenly faithfulness; he forever embraces you with his tender mercy, and sustains you with his deep and fully satisfying comfort. When this unsearchable miracle is bestowed on you, then and only then will the secret of his divine glory be revealed to you, and will the 'God with us' in you come to fulfillment.

The victory is then assured and the triumph cannot fail.

Then, indeed, will death and sin and the Devil be defeated in you, because they cannot stand before a Holy God.

And even if all unrighteousness and corruption of many

godless nations should conspire against you, and make a covenant to destroy your soul, they could not and would not be able to defeat you.

Because, if they want to succeed they would have to drive out the Holy Spirit from the hidden core of your inner self, something they cannot do, simply because the power of what is created cannot oppose God the Holy Spirit. Indeed, no powers of darkness can even touch God the Holy Spirit. That's why we encourage all who are oppressed and overcome by the storms of life to be of good cheer. Your Saviour lives to pray for you always and God the Holy Spirit lives and works in you. Your God is in the midst of you, and he will not fail or desert you.

So, as far as it concerns you, "be strong and courageous" (Jos. 1:18), for you know and can tell your children after you that this is the very work of God the Holy Spirit in you, that he lives in you to work through you. He is the one who allows you to do it, and you do it through him.

This is Part III of this chapter from Pentecost (with Ascension Day) by Abraham Kuyper, translated by Jack Van Meggelen (jack@vanmeggelen.ca)



## Celebration/Grieving

## Epiphany

Brett Alan Dewing

As part of our Protestant heritage, we in the Reformed tradition tend to overlook much of the liturgical calendar that our Catholic and Orthodox neighbours observe. As each generation passes the torch of church leadership down, we seem to be losing more and more of our knowledge and respect for the Church Year. For some other forgotten holidays, see the sidebar.

The first I noticed this was when I realized that a number of my friends had never heard of Epiphany. In my youth, Epiphany had accompanied Christmas in much the same way that Ash Wednesday preceded Easter. They were complementary holidays, and the celebration of one without the other seemed to lessen both. And yet, many of my peers had never considered Christmas as part of a package deal.

## Historical Epiphany

Observed on January 6, Epiphany is one name for the end of the Christmas season, otherwise known as Twelfth Night (the last of the twelve days of Christmas) or Theophany. It is on this day, marked as long ago as the fourth

century, that Western Christians celebrate the visit to Christ of the magi, kings, or wisemen. Its name comes from the Greek meaning "to manifest or show."

On Epiphany, we remember not only that the child Christ was presented with royal gifts but that he was thus revealed to the non-Jewish world. This manifestation of the Incarnate God has caused some debate over the centuries. Orthodox communities often celebrate Theophany on the same day for the same reasons, but they remember not the Magi's visit but Christ's baptism in the Jordan. It was this event, they claim, that truly introduced Jesus as God's Son to the world.

In fact, if we look back at our own traditions, we see that what is touted as Christ's manifestation to the Gentiles was actually more of a general "coming out party." Though the Messiah had been foretold centuries before his birth, very few at the time recognized Jesus as that Saviour. The proclamation of the shepherds who attended his birth swayed a relative few and seems to have not even made much of a stir.

When the Kings of the East arrived to adore the newborn king, they first stopped off at Herod's court. Herod, who was clearly on the lookout for pretenders to his throne, was taken aback by the news of these foreign dignitaries. Nothing had reached his ears regarding this king.

Thus, before Christ is even shown to those who have traveled to see him, he has been revealed to the Jewish world anew. At once, a number of kings are searching for him, some bearing gifts, but one with a sword.

## A place for the magi

We've just been through Christmas festivities, and many of those events likely involved the wisemen at the manger. However, most theologians agree that the "three kings" we sing of were almost certainly not at Jesus's side in that Bethlehem stable.

Matthew 2 says that the magi entered a house and that after they left, the Holy Family was sent home through Egypt. By comparing the accounts of the magi's visit with those of Jesus's circumcision in Luke 2:21 and Herod's slaughter of the innocents in Matthew 2:16 and historical accounts of Herod's reign, we can assume that the

events celebrated at Epiphany happened when Jesus was between 40 days and 2 years old.

The identities of the magi are also hazy. The term used in Matthew (*magoi*) survives today as magi and likely refers to a priest caste charged with astrology and the search of kings. Their arts were likely something of a mixture between what we now know as astrology and astronomy, and it was in these duties that they saw the star.

Some suggest that said star was really Jupiter, a kingly portent that was particularly bright around the time we know the magi journeyed. Others maintain that it must have been a supernatural object because Scripture says that it moved. They also suggest that only the chosen magi could see it in the night sky. In truth, we do not know if the star physically moved or presented itself to a select few. We do know that we serve a God who can do anything he pleases but often chooses to work within the rules of nature he established.

## Beyond fact

Regardless of the facts surrounding the visit of the magi, the event itself holds great significance to us today. It was a pivotal moment in God's revelation of his Son to his creation. It was a definitive identification of Jesus as a king. It was a breakthrough of hospitality toward a rather unwelcomed Divine Guest.

While the magi were not necessarily kings themselves, and while we have no reason to believe that they numbered three, the classic carol "We Three Kings" gets at the underlying truth of that moment. The gifts presented to the young Christ bore both historical and symbolic importance. They were a foreshadowing of his ministry, death, and coming reign. They acknowledged the child, as well as his announcing star, as a light to the Gentiles.

By reflecting upon the events of the magi's journey, we may come to several of our own epiphanies, carried to us by the Spirit of the One who sent the star to light the way, even through a pagan system of divination or a cold science of sky-watching. Whatever happened, we must remember that it did happen. Take a moment to look starward and earthward, inward and upward.

My window seat

Mendelt Hoekstra



## Climbing mountains

It is a difficult thing to shepherd children through grief. Each child grieves at their own pace and at their own understanding.

Two Decembers ago, my wife Marisa went to be with Jesus leaving myself and our children, then ages 1, 3 and 5 behind. I didn't know how I was going to steer them through that time. I knew that the strength of the Spirit and the community surrounding us would surely help, but I didn't know how it would unfold.

Sometimes the children said things words that would physically wound me. When our three-year-old would cry in bed at night calling Marisa's name, my body was physiologically affected. It was tough to see and hear. It proved over and over again that it is harder to see my children grieve than to grieve myself.

Over the past year I have looked for signs of healing in the children. I have had our two oldest children see a child psychologist who has told me a number of different things. I am very conscious not to put my 34-year-old perspective in their now two-, four- and 6-year-old minds. Naturally, I want to see that the children are grieving well, healing at their own pace and eating their vegetables. I am aware that I am not a child psychologist but possibly more aware that I am their dad. For some things a regular dad will always trump the professionals.

Before Marisa died, whenever I would read books with the kids, I would do voices. I do a number of different ethnic voices that the kids think are hilarious. They would pick before the book what voice they would want to hear.

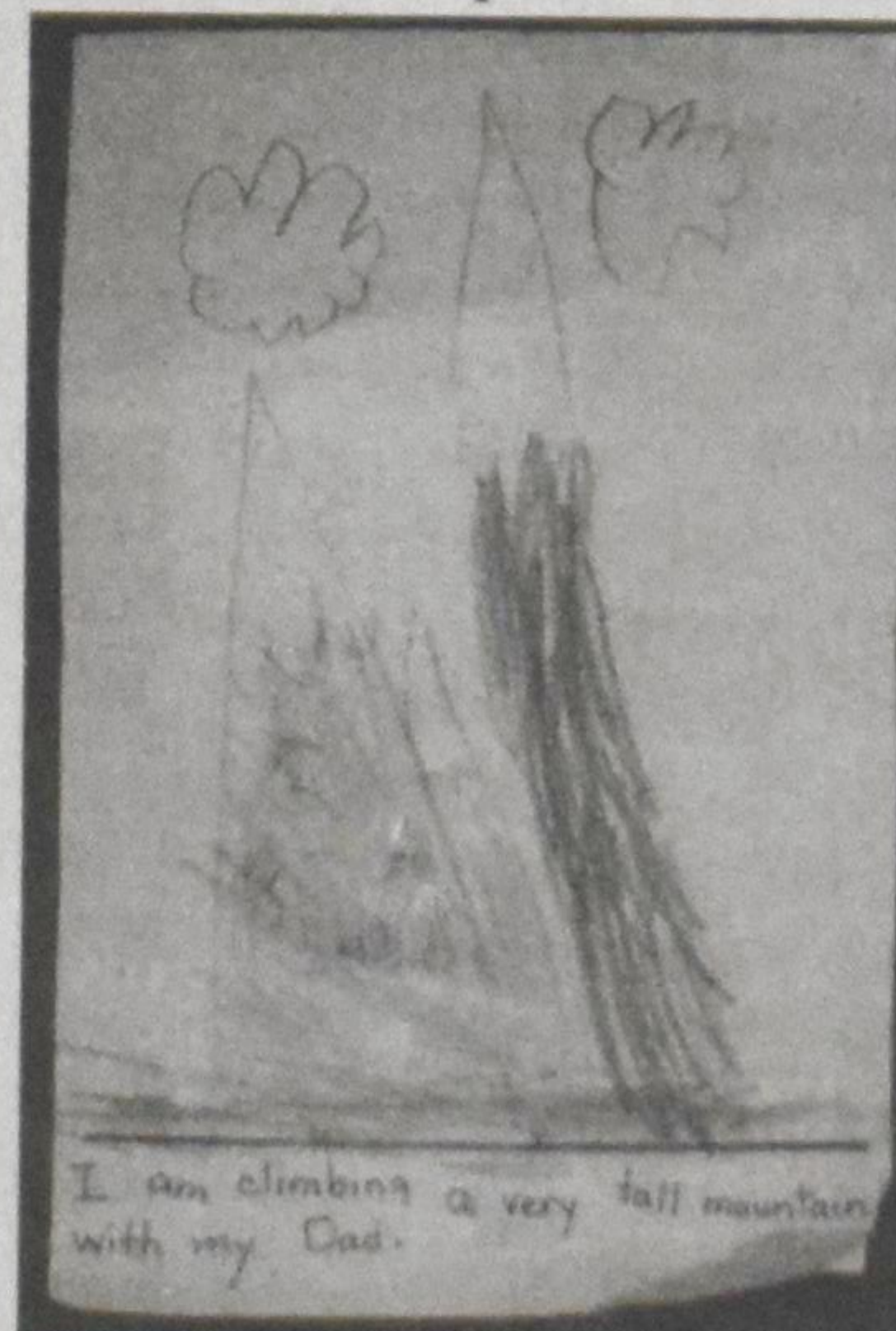
Then Marisa died. We read books that night. I thought I would try some voices to see if I could lighten things up a bit. Our three- and five-year-old both said no. They were adamant that there would be no voices that night.

"Just your regular self" our three-year-old said. I thought to myself, my "regular self" has died. So we read the books with no voices. Since then I would periodically ask if asked if anyone wanted to hear any voices. No, was always the answer. Until a few weeks ago.

When we sat down to read some books, one of the kids said that she wanted to hear a "silly voice please. The Scottish one," she said. I thought "aye lassie." I asked the two others if that was okay and they both said that it was.

I wondered deeply about that. Was that healing? Maybe. Was that a shoot coming forth from a stump? Possibly. Was it wonderful? Absolutely.

That same week our oldest boy, who is now in grade one, came home with this picture.



We are climbing a very tall mountain indeed.

Today I laugh when I look back at those days when Marisa and I had no children, were both working full-time jobs and thought we were busy. Perspective can change things quickly. It is busy rearing three kids without a spouse. I should rephrase that; it is busy rearing three kids well without a spouse.

I am only a year into being with the kids without Marisa. I am starting to live the reality that millions of single parents, more often single mothers, have lived for much longer than a year. And the truth is, I didn't give single parents much of a consideration. I think they deserve it.

Mendelt Hoekstra ([mendelt.hoekstra@gmail.com](mailto:mendelt.hoekstra@gmail.com)) is the founder and director of the Music Therapy program at Bethesda, an organization owned and operated by the Mennonite Brethren Conference of Ontario, that supports adults with developmental possibilities. He lives in Vineland, ON with his three children.

## Other Lost Holidays

## Ascension Day

- fortieth day after Easter
- celebrates Christ's bodily ascension into Heaven
- the four days prior to Ascension Day are known as Rogation Days

## Candlemas

- February 2nd
- celebrates the presentation Christ at the temple

## Gaudete Sunday

- third Sunday of Advent
- celebrates the joyful anticipation of Christ

## Holy Saturday

- day before Easter
- commemorates Christ's time in the tomb and/or in Hell

## Michaelmas

- September 29
- celebrates the archangel Michael and his heavenly hosts and the casting of Satan out of Heaven

## Trinity Sunday

- Sunday after Pentecost
- celebrates the Trinity



## Nigeria

# What's behind the Jos crisis?

Adrian Helleman

"Riots in Jos" is what we heard on a radio broadcast as we were driving home from our daughter's place in Massachusetts on Friday, November 28. "Not again," we thought. We had experienced more than one crisis while we lived in Jos for six years. What happened this time, and why? Now we were in North America, thousands of kilometers away from Nigeria. When we arrived home in Toronto that evening, we were inundated with emails from friends and colleagues in Jos. They informed us that they

were safe, but that there were hundreds of refugees, and some of them were staying in our house, as well as in the homes of our colleagues at the university.

The recent crisis in Jos was just the latest in a long list of major crises to hit Plateau State, and the city of Jos in particular. We can date them by year: 2001, 2002, 2004, and 2008. Notice the progression. If it continues at this rate, the next crisis should not be until 2016, but it will probably not be that long. The factors that gave rise to all these crises need to be addressed soon and some attempt made to resolve them or there will be further riots.

The question that needs to be answered now, some weeks after the November riots, is this: What caused the Jos crisis? But before we can answer that question we must first review briefly what happened during those days of violence.

## Out of the world's eye

At first there were a few reports on the Jos crisis in the international media, but Jos was pushed off the front pages by what happened in Mumbai. While we do not in any way want to minimize the tragedy in Mumbai, the death toll in Jos was at least three times higher. However, Jos is neither a tourist spot nor a major business capital. Nor, it must be added, did any foreigners lose their lives in the Jos riots. And, perhaps as important, no international news agencies have correspondents stationed in Jos. All of which may explain why the Jos crisis attracted little media attention, except in Nigeria itself.

For the next few days, friends and colleagues in Jos kept us informed. Danny McCain, our colleague at the University of Jos, provided lengthy accounts every day of what happened, especially in the university compound where we lived. At first he was unable to send his reports because it was almost impossible to find an Internet connection in Jos. Not until the end of the crisis was he able to send anything from the university.



We also searched daily for media reports on the Internet. We appreciate a long report from John Boer, who lists many sources, both Christian and Muslim. This report was very helpful in preparing this analysis. From these many sources it is apparent that there is little agreement either on precisely what happened during the riots in Jos or why the conflict arose. In spite of this difficulty, I will try to make some sense of the situation, based as well on our experience of living in Jos and our understanding of the conflict.

## Politics in Nigeria

Everyone agrees that the riots started in the early hours of Friday, November 28. The previous day there had been municipal elections in Jos North, an area which includes much of the city and not just the northern part. Many Nigerians believe that honest and fair elections are next to impossible in Nigeria. Some quickly concluded that these elections were no better than most elections in that country. According to Muslims, the Plateau State government manipulated the results in Jos North to favor a candidate who is both a Christian and a member of an ethnic group indigenous to Jos.

Not only is everything in Nigeria politicized, but it is indeed fair to say that "politics is everything." Politics is widely regarded as little more than an important avenue to wealth. Very few Nigerians enter politics in order to serve the nation. Rather, many regard it as an easy way of enriching oneself at the expense of others. In a country where most people are poor, but where enormous revenue is generated through the extraction of oil, there is an almost irresistible temptation to acquire a share of this wealth, by whatever means possible. Nigerians generally view them as corrupt people, who show up at meetings of the national or state assemblies mainly in order to pick up fat envelopes.

This little bit of background information will give you an indication of why elections are so fiercely contested in Nigeria. Much is

at stake for those who gain political office, not only for themselves but also for their village, their tribe, and even their faith. The violence which followed the recent elections in Jos highlights this.

## A perfect storm of conflict

Politics, religion, and ethnicity are not separate issues in Nigeria. In Plateau State, in Nigeria's "Middle Belt" (the central region between the Muslim-majority North and the largely Christian South), various Christian ethnic groups co-exist uneasily with Hausa Muslim settlers. The major question, on which Christians and Muslims have totally different views, is who was responsible for starting the violence in the recent Jos riots.

Some sources report that very early Friday morning, on the day after the elections, Muslims claimed vote-tampering and immediately began attacking Christians. When election officials had refused to post results for the local council election by late Thursday evening, Muslims suspected that their candidates had lost the election to candidates of the largely Christian-supported governing party, who would soon be declared the winners. Muslims did not wait for the official posting of results, and took matters into their own hands.

In the violence that followed, the motives were apparently as much political as ethnic and religious. Whatever the reason, hundreds were left dead and thousands had to flee their homes. It is also clear that federal troops were sent in quickly to attempt to stop the carnage and impose law and order. Although Muslim sources claimed that Christians had their own militia and accused them of many killings, from a variety of other sources we know that during the first few days federal forces were largely responsible for killing 300 Muslims, whose bodies were brought to the central mosque and were later buried in mass graves in a cemetery on the outskirts of Jos.

Government officials finally announced the election results on Saturday, November

29. They declared that the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), which is backed mainly by Christians, had won 16 of the 17 council seats in Plateau State, defeating the All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANP), which in turn is supported primarily by Muslims.

## Election aftermath

Gunfire was still heard sporadically Saturday morning, but it died down by the end of the day. Tensions remained high on Sunday, after authorities had extended a curfew on residents of several districts of the city. The military had orders to shoot anyone who disobeyed the curfew on sight. By the end of the weekend, state officials stated that about 500 people had been arrested.

Many feared that rioting could lead to a repeat of the violence that hit Jos on September 7, 2001, when more than 1000 people died. There was further violence in Jos in May 2002, and in May 2004 another 700 people died in the southern part of Plateau State during Christian-Muslim clashes.

Once a semblance peace was restored, the Christian community expressed resentment at what some termed "biased and inaccurate reporting of events" by the international media. Christians noticed that several international news agencies had reported that the violence was triggered by the results of the local elections. On the contrary, they point out that the actual voting proceeded peacefully. Violence broke out in the early hours of Friday, long before the electoral results were announced on Saturday. Christians emphatically assert that they did not start the violence.

Christians maintain, further, that rioters did not target political institutions, as might be expected from their displeasure with what was a political decision. Rather, armed with guns, spears, machetes and other weapons, they made straight for Christian businesses, churches, schools, and the homes of pastors. According to Christian sources, this proves that the perpetrators of violence were only using the election as an occasion to launch their attacks and cause widespread damage.

From all indications, the total Christians who were killed was not less than 100. In addition, more than 16 churches are known to have been burnt down, and at least four pastors are confirmed to have been killed.

Christians in Jos are also disturbed by reports that suggested that they had killed the 300 Muslims whose bodies were later deposited at the central mosque. They insist that these Muslims died while obeying orders from a mosque, which had used its loudspeakers to instruct all Muslims to defy the authorities and participate in a "jihad" against Christians.

## A planned attack?

"Jihad" is not an inappropriate term to describe what Muslims are doing in



## Nigeria

Plateau State. This goes back more to the pre-colonial period, the time of Usman dan Fodio (1754-1817) and his "jihad," which was intended to result in a theocratic state. Some Muslims want to achieve this as well by ridding Plateau State of all Christians.

Local security sources insist that the rioters were shot because they defied a nighttime curfew imposed by the military. The rioters then launched fresh attacks, including an unsuccessful large-scale assault on police barracks. Commenting on these deaths, the General Secretary of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Engineer Salifu reported that it was not Christians who killed them; rather, "it was their own unfortunate attitude." He also articulated the local concern that such inaccurate reporting could fuel further violence against Christians elsewhere in Nigeria.

Plateau State Governor Jonah David Jang said in a radio and television broadcast that the crisis was pre-planned by disgruntled elements who had schemed to manipulate religious sentiments to create instability in the state.

There is evidence that the violence may indeed have been planned in advance. Five hundred Muslim rioters were arrested, some of whom were dressed in fake police and military uniforms. Two hundred were identified as citizens of the neighboring Republic of Niger, while 300 are from the northern Nigerian states of Kano, Katsina and Sokoto, which are all solidly Muslim. Some of the rioters later informed police that they arrived in Jos three days prior to the violence. And eye witnesses affirmed that the rioters were well supplied with weapons.

The Anglican Archbishop of Jos, the Rt. Rev. Benjamin Kwashi, responded to the crisis by calling it a wake-up call for the authorities, saying that it was time "to undertake a serious appraisal of all the previous crises in Jos and elsewhere that have affected the church in northern Nigeria, and to ensure that truth is told, truth is maintained and justice is done." He added, "We have become a convenient scapegoat and target for those with grievances about events both at home and abroad. The Church in northern Nigeria needs urgent national and international protection. We have suffered this violence for over 20 years and it is now becoming unbearable."

### A long-standing dispute

The reports we have received indicate that Muslims have a totally different perspective on the Jos crisis. Muslims not only blame Christians for the violence, but they blame the death of the Muslim attackers on what they call a "Christian militia." In order to better understand the Muslim position, we must examine closely what commentators have identified as the two main causes of strife between the adherents of the two faiths.

First, the successive crises in Plateau State represent a contest for resources, especially access to land. A majority of the indigenous people in the state (called "indigenes" in Nigeria) are Christians. Many of the indigenes are tied to the land, and are either peasant farmers or civil service workers. The Muslim minority, many of them Hausa settlers, tend to be dry-season farmers or engage in cattle rearing (the Fulani). Business in Jos is dominated by ethnic groups who come from elsewhere in Nigeria, especially the Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa.

Pressures to obtain land were exacerbated after 1986 with the Structural Adjustment Program, which was imposed by the IMF.



*Women worshipping in refugee camp*

This led to many public servants, company workers, and military personnel being forced to retire. Many of them returned to the land in order to survive, which exerted great pressure on limited land resources, and made land a highly prized possession. One result was that the indigenes refused to accept the land claims of the predominantly Muslim settlers. The ancestors of many of today's settlers came to Jos more than a century ago when the tin mines needed workers. But, according to Muslims, today they are still not accepted or accorded the same rights as indigenes.

Second, this issue has become acute because of political rivalry between indigenes and settlers. In Jos, the struggle between the Hausa-Fulani and the traditional native tribes (Berom, Anagwata, and Afisare) has become a major factor in the Jos crises. This conflict was heightened by the creation of the Jos South LGA (local government area) out of Jos North LGA, a separation that was effected largely along religious lines by the Babangida administration

(1985-93). While Jos South is mostly Christian, Jos North, which is where the university is located, is divided between Christians and Muslims, and is therefore politically volatile.

### Muslims claim disenfranchisement

In March 2008, local elections in Plateau State were cancelled after being completed, but before the results could be announced. The November elections were thus an attempt to finish what was started in March. It is widely suspected that the PDP was losing in key LGAs, including Jos North. Many Muslims were angry that the new election in November was held on Thursday, an unusual day for elections, and that the collation of the

State by being excluded from public office through the manipulation of elections. They claim that they constitute the majority in both Jos and Plateau State. Christians retort that Muslims are no longer in the majority, but they are not excluded. If they do feel disenfranchised, Christians add, this is no different from what Christians from the Middle Belt or the South experience in northern Muslim-controlled states, even though they have lived in the North for many decades.

### A history of violence

According to Muslims, the violence was started by Christians. Again, Christians refute this claim. A careful study of all the conflicts in Nigeria between Christians and Muslims over the last few decades reveals that Muslims have always started these riots and are the first to resort to violence.

For many decades, Christians were rather politically apathetic. They regarded politics as something evil and responded to violence by heeding the biblical injunction to 'turn the other cheek.' But in the last few years the attitude of Christians has changed. They have become active in politics, no longer allowing Muslims to dominate the political stage.

With the rising influence of Christians, it is not surprising that Muslims feel excluded in states such as Plateau. This change of attitude on the part of Christians does not excuse in any way Muslim charges of the manipulation of election results, but it helps to explain the claims of disenfranchisement by Muslims, who have lost a lot of political strength, not only nationally but also at the state and local level.

The British used Muslim emirs to run the country, using the principle of "indirect rule." Since independence in 1960, Muslim-led military governments have largely dominated the Nigerian scene. Although not the first, a civilian government came into power again in 1999 under President Obasanjo, a Christian Yoruba. Umaru Yar'Adua, the current president, again a civilian, is a Fulani Muslim. Like Obasanjo, he is a member of the governing party, the PDP. Not all Muslims support the ANP, but in Plateau State many Muslims do vote for that party.

### A delicate balance

In addition, Muslims feel that, where they are in a majority, they should have a Muslim ruler. Thus it is hard for them to cede the reins of power to Christians, even when they are no longer in the majority. In Nigeria there are now more Christians than Muslims, at least according to *Operation World*, which claims that at the turn of the century, more than 50 per cent of the population was Christian and about 40 per cent

*Continued on p. 19*



## Ministry



## Campus Ministry is the shape of ministry to come

Andre Basson

Every now and then, students will invite me to join them for a beer at one of their favourite watering holes in downtown St. Catharines. Over the years, this particular hangout has acquired the status of Brock University's version of an off-campus grad student lounge cum pub. Most nights of the week, the clientele include a good number of senior students and a scattering of faculty, discussing anything from Heidegger to the Maple Leafs' chances of winning the Stanley Cup. It's usually quite noisy – not because of drunken rowdiness, but rather as a result of the animated conversations.

I must admit, the first time I had a beer there I felt uneasy. A beer now and then with friends or colleagues is one thing, but having one with students is another, especially when drinking has become such a serious problem on our campuses. Is this the kind of example a campus minister should be setting?

### Professor Mias

Back in South Africa, my old seminary professor in practical theology must have been turning in his grave!

Prof. Mias, as he was fondly called by students and fellow faculty alike, was a venerable figure on campus. He was always dressed in a dark suit, a long-sleeved woollen waistcoat even in the dog days of the African summer, and a hat which he only removed when he was teaching. It was hard to imagine him ever having been anything but a Dutch Reformed seminary professor.

He came from solid farming stock, and the story goes that since his family did not have the means to send every son to university a decision was made that he should be the fortunate one. Thanks to his conservative Dutch Reformed upbringing, he would have seen this as a clear sign of divine calling, and in his book this was serious business.

When I recall the years I had him as a teacher, what comes to mind is his seriousness, or gravitas as the ancient Romans used to call it. His lectures were anything but stimulating. For the most part, they were abstruse and heavy on doctrine, often laced with references to the writings of the immediate post-WW II generation of German and especially Dutch popular theologians, among whom Okke Jager was by far his favourite.

Situations in which dear Prof. Mias never had the opportunity to minister forced me to conveniently forget so much of what I had learned in his lectures, and I don't mean to belittle the hard work and academic rigor he unfailingly put into them. As far as he was concerned, he was preparing his students to serve in conventional types of congregational ministry, according to a model as immutable and unchanging as the Heidelberg Catechism. There was no congregational ill, he believed, that could not be cured by good Reformed

preaching (epitomized by the three-part sermon), faithful pastoral care, and a good dollop of church discipline where circumstances demanded it. Small groups were anathema to him. In his mind, they were the slippery slope leading straight back to the worst excesses of nineteenth century Pietism. By the same token, I am sure if he were alive today he would disapprove of many other changes that have swept through the church and become standard practice, from banners and candles to praise and worship teams and congregational participation in the liturgy.

### First tastes of future ministry

My first charge after leaving seminary was a naval training base where I served as assistant chaplain. Almost from day one, I realized I was in a ministry for which I was for the most part woefully unprepared. Suddenly I had to deal with young adults whose attitude towards the Christian faith and the church was in most cases lukewarm at best. Many of them had even undergone the traditional rites of passage that granted access to full membership of the Dutch Reformed Church, namely Sunday School, Catechism, and Profession of Faith. But instead of deepening their faith, this experience seemed to have left them only apathetic and even cynical.

Looking back, I recognize in the young navy recruits I ministered to many of the qualities I now observe in the students who are currently the focus of my ministry, qualities we consider today to be typically postmodern, especially in regard to the high value placed on authenticity and on openness to other ways of expressing one's faith. While I found them so frustrating to deal with then, they are the very qualities I now find so refreshing and exciting in the young adults whom I have contact with in my work as campus minister.

The time I spent in the navy forced me to unlearn so much of what I had learned at seminary about ministry. On the other hand, in ways which I could only attribute to God's plan for my life, it laid the groundwork for what I am doing now.

### The place of campus ministry

Of course, there are many who will argue that campus ministry is merely peripheral to mainstream ministry. In some respects, the two are indeed quite different, but this is not to say that the former has little to say to the latter. On the contrary, the university is more often than not the place where the ideas and ideologies that will shape the society of tomorrow are first formed, developed,



and debated. Ignoring the university and shutting out the voice of campus ministry as it tries to inform the church about these ideas and ideologies, will eventually render the Christian community unable to fulfill its calling to be the salt of the earth and light of the world (Matthew 5:13,14).

Two years ago, when Brock Christian Reformed Campus Ministry and the university's department of philosophy hosted a conference on Postmodernism, I received a call one morning from someone who wanted to know where the word came from since he was unable to find it in his dictionary. I would like to believe that the call was prompted by genuine interest and not by a suspicion that the whole conference was just another instance of academic obscurantism.

In his book, *GloboChrist: The Great Commission Takes a Postmodern Turn* (Baker Academic, 2008, p. 153), Carl Raschke observes that anyone who wishes to avoid Postmodernism has to avoid the 21st century altogether. Indeed, I have still to find a church in which I have not seen some evidence of a postmodern mindset, even though most rank and file members are probably as unfamiliar with the word and its meaning as my anonymous caller two years ago.

Any church or ministry that meets needs of people in transition has fabulous potential for growth and for seeing many people come home to God

Campus Ministry today is a postmodern ministry par excellence and therefore of crucial value to any church that seeks to meaningfully engage this and future generations. For a start, Campus Ministry takes the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) very seriously, however not through preaching in the most general sense of the word, or the proliferation of programs, but simply (to put it in Luther's terms) by being Christ to and for the world.

The medium is the message, according to Marshall McLuhan's famous aphorism, and

this is especially true of Jesus. In this sense, Campus Ministry is in the privileged position to show the church of the 21st century what incarnational ministry is truly all about. Above all else, incarnational ministry is relational and not about "getting the message out [but rather] about manifesting and making real the meaning of the paradox of the incarnation and the miracle of Christ's resurrection" (Raschke, p. 48).

What Rick Richardson notes about postmodern people in general in his amazing book, *Evangelism Outside the Box: New Ways to Help People Experience the Good News* (Intervarsity Press, 2000, p. 81), applies especially to the postmodern student: "People want to be touched and inspired, not exhorted and preached at. People want an experience more than an explanation, a memorable image more than mere information."

### An example in person

I was a student I met one evening at a Campus for Christ event. His CRC credentials were impeccable, but, although he still considered himself a Christian, a few hurtful experiences had left him quite alienated from the church. Nevertheless, he very soon started dropping by my office at least once a week for an informal chat. Only when he broached the subject did we discuss faith. In this regard, he could have been a poster boy for the postmodern generation. Because he was distrustful of glib and easy answers, he steered clear of the Christian clubs on campus and became a stalwart of Campus Ministry where, by his own admission, he actually felt challenged in his faith and encouraged to ask questions, no matter how disconcerting they were. Over time, I saw his faith mature to the extent that he even began to invite his friends to partner with him in our efforts to establish a truly accepting and life changing community of Christians on campus.

In short, this generation, perhaps more than any other before it, wants to see that faith makes a difference. Or put in another way, to convince them that the Good News is indeed the Good News, one has to be the Good News! To paraphrase Raschke, instead of showing them the Jesus we think they need, we have to allow Jesus to show them the way starting from the situation they're in (p. 90).

### Meeting needs in transition

Postmodern ministry is therefore not limited to traditional institutions like the church but also wants to be – and needs to be – present in what Raschke refers to as the "sensitive space of people's lives (p. 48)," especially in times of change and transition. And it is change and transition more than anything else that characterize the life of students and demarcate the most fruitful areas of campus ministry today. To quote Richardson again, "Any church or ministry that meets needs of people in transition has

*Continued on p. 20*



## News/Comments

## Predictions for 2009

Bert Hielema

Year End Time. Prediction Time. Here is my cluster shot, bound to hit something: next year will be good, bad, excellent, depressing. You take your pick, because your guess is probably better than mine.

Here's a thought: Noah's Ark was built by amateurs; the Titanic by professionals. The professional economic forecasters were off the mark so much that even Queen Elizabeth, during a visit to the London School of Economics last month, wondered: "Why did no one see it coming?"

Good question. Although Her Majesty does not pay income tax, she too must have lost money, a predicament which pains her because she is known to be a frugal lady. One of my younger brothers paid tens of thousands of euros to get an MBA in Geneva, Switzerland, but he too had no clue. So who did get it right? Apparently Pope Benedict XVI – then still Cardinal Ratzinger – was the first to foresee the crisis. His 1985 paper predicted "that an undisciplined economy would collapse by its own rules."

Even brainy Ben Bernanke, the top financial guru in the USA, was way off the mark. In his Senate nomination hearing of 2005 he said that the system had already benefited from a series of crises that had reinforced its ability to cope with difficult times: "The depths, the liquidity, the flexibility of the financial markets has increased greatly." There's another Titanic victim.

So is Jean-Claude Trichet, European Central Bank president, who told four newspapers in mid-July: "Our baseline scenario is that we will have a trough in the profile of growth in the euro area in the second and third quarters of this year (thus from April through September) and, following this, a progressive return to ongoing moderate

growth." Instead, Europe has seen conditions worsening.

There was a time, some 30 years ago, when forecasters prescribed magic authority to computers, visualizing that they, with ever larger processing powers, would make it easier to see what's coming. We now know better: somewhat more humble, and maybe a shade wiser, we start to grasp that economies are complex, dynamic, non-linear systems in which faintly fathomed facts can fatally influence final outcomes ("I like the alliteration" – Editor) – the proverbial flapping of a butterfly's wings that causes a hurricane.

So where are the butterflies today? Actually there was one colossal specimen at large: cheap money, which begat liars' loans, which begat colossal debt, which begat market – and money meltdown. Now brand-new economic measures are required to come to a new equilibrium, a crucial balance between human needs and nature's capacity to provide.

However it's not the butterflies I worry about. There are dragons out there, creatures much more fearful. These violent animals are the offspring of our carbonizing the environment, giving birth to the unholy Trinity of Peak Oil, Peak Heat and Peak Food. In addition all-pervasive plastics are playing havoc with our collective immune system to the point where, when the inevitable pandemic appears, our natural body defenses are fatally weakened.

Is that me again, always the party pooper, the killjoy, the perennial pessimist? I know that to be popular, as John Maynard Keynes has observed, it is usually better to be conventionally wrong than unconventionally right. Yet, believe it or not, I am an optimist.

Here's where we are at: Capitalism is sunk, just like the supposedly unsinkable

Titanic. With the old system under water, and nothing new on the horizon, this is the time to build on our own modest Ark. There the dragons, although at our doorsteps, can still be stopped.

So here is my wish for 2009: having learned from the erroneous notions of yesteryear, such as our impossible quest for unlimited growth, equating happiness with the acquisition of goods, and, especially, our neglect in providing a viable future for our children, we make our own small-scale beginnings in which we can avoid the mistakes of the past.

The primary task is to restore nature to become livable for our children. That is our foremost priority. Go green. Gear down. Relax. Economize. Grow your own. Bike. Walk. Shop local. Volunteer. Start now to build your own ark, a self-sufficient refuge for family and friends.

If I read the Scriptures correctly, then I must conclude that we are approaching the time when genuine renewal is at hand. God loves this world too much to let the Unholy Trinity of the three Dragons destroy this beautiful cosmos. It's God's world, after all, even though Evil has taken temporary possession of it.

I admit that a different direction – following Noah's example – will not come about easily. But if we want to be part of a new world to come, we have to be the agents of change. The current vacuum offers a once-in-a-life-time opening to start a better system in the coming year.

Have an advent-urous year.

*Bert Hielema is a retired real estate agent who, with his wife Dini, lives in Tweed Ontario. This and earlier columns can be seen at "hielema.ca." He can be reached at "hielema@allstream.net."*

## Jos crisis...continued from p.17

Muslim, yet it admits that it is difficult to verify these figures. Muslims, not surprisingly, dispute such statistics.

There are no reliable statistics in Nigeria regarding religious adherence, since religion is specifically excluded from the census forms. The most recent census in 2007 again did not list this politically explosive category. But in Plateau State, and even in Jos itself, Muslims do not seem to be in the majority, although they are very numerous in Jos North, especially in some areas immediately surrounding the university.

As part of their change in attitude, Christians have also become proactive in protecting themselves. Now they do retaliate when attacked. And if churches are burnt down, they respond by burning down mosques, although that is not an appropriate biblical response.

In the various classes that I taught at

the University of Jos over the past few years, I have tried to dissuade my students from resorting to violence, even if only in retaliation for Muslim violence. Many of my students are pastors and church leaders, and thus they need to set a good example for their people. They certainly should not initiate violence or incite others to do so. The Bible does not condone violence. As believers, we serve the Prince of Peace. Nevertheless, I admit that it is hard for me to speak peace to people who have recently lost their churches, businesses, and homes to violence.

Such is our short analysis of the Jos crisis. It is not an easy story to tell. What happened is tragic, and we pray that it will never happen again; but we are realistic enough to realize that it probably will.

## Learning for the future

I believe that what needs to be done to

prevent further riots is, first of all, to appoint a commission to investigate the recent crisis, as some Muslims are requesting. In addition, a serious attempt must be made to address the underlying causes that people of both faiths have raised in their reports on the crisis. The gap separating them, however, is so great that it seems that Christians and Muslims are not reporting the same event.

It is important that Nigerians deal seriously with the problem of land ownership, the status of indigenes and settlers, and the consequent disenfranchisement of large sections of the population within their own country. They need to take the conversation far beyond the rhetoric of simplistic reporting about ethnic and religious violence by the media. The fundamental issue is one of human rights that all Nigerians should be able to enjoy by virtue of citizenship. The difficult issue of political corruption only exacerbates perceptions of injustice. Yet, if

## Europe needs Joe Lardbutt

*Mark Steyn comments on the bail-out plans of the upcoming Obama administration.*

"If I understand ... Senator Obama's logic, in a just world Americans would be 4 percent of the population and consume 4 percent of the world's resources. And in these past few months we've made an excellent start toward that blessed utopia: Americans are driving smaller cars, buying smaller homes, giving smaller Christmas presents.

And yet, strangely, President-elect Barack Obama doesn't seem terribly happy about the Obamafication of the U.S. economy. He's proposing some 5.7 bazillion dollar "stimulus" package or whatever it is now to "stimulate" it back into its bad old ways.

And how does the rest of the world, of whose tender sensibilities then-Senator Obama was so mindful, feel about the collapse of American consumer excess? They're aghast, they're terrified, they're on a one-way express elevator down the abyss with no hope of putting on the brakes unless the global economy can restore aggregate demand.

What does all that mumbo-jumbo about "aggregate demand" mean? Well, that's a fancy term for you – yes, you, Joe Lardbutt, the bloated, disgusting embodiment of American excess, driving around in your Chevy Behemoth, getting two blocks to the gallon as you shear the roof off the drive-thru lane to pick up your \$7.93 decaf gingersnap-mocha-pepperoni-zebra mussel frapuccino, which makes for a wonderful thirst-quencher after you've been working up a sweat watching the plasma TV in your rec room with the thermostat set to 87.

The message from the European political class couldn't be more straightforward: If you crass, vulgar Americans don't ramp up the demand, we're kaput. Unless you get back to previous levels of planet-devastating consumption, the planet is screwed."

*(Excerpt from Jewish World review)*



these issues are not addressed adequately, we may well expect the Jos crisis to repeat itself every few years, especially when there are elections.

Let us fervently pray that another crisis does not

*Adrian Helleman and his wife, Wendy, taught at the University of Jos for six years. In 2009 they are returning briefly to Nigeria and then will teach in Tanzania for a semester. Adrian can be reached at: adrian.helleman@gmail.com.*



## Classifieds

Birthday		Obituary	
1919	January 7 2009	Bradford, Ontario May 31, 1944	Orillia, Ontario November 3, 2008
<p>With joy and thanksgiving to our heavenly Father, the children of</p>  <p><b>Janna Burgler-Spanninga</b></p> <p>wish to announce the <b>90th birthday</b> of our mother.</p> <p>From the families of Hammie, Casey &amp; Sherri (friend), Tina &amp; Klaas, Willy &amp; Karen, Hank &amp; Irene, Rita &amp; John, Charles &amp; Joan, Harry &amp; Louise, Cathy &amp; Jake, Helen &amp; Delio, and Tony (deceased) and grandchildren, great-grandchildren &amp; great-great-grandchildren.</p> <p>We will be having an <b>Open House</b> at the Listowel Christian School on January 10 from 2-4 p.m.</p> <p>Mom's address is 101-555 Elm Ave N, Listowel ON N4W 3P5</p>		 <p><i>Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.</i> Proverbs 3:5-6</p> <p><b>ANNE MARIE VANDEKUYT</b> nee Sneepe</p> <p>At her home in Orillia with family at her side after a long courageous battle with cancer the Lord took her home.</p> <p>Beloved wife of Bert VandeKuyt Much loved mother and grandmother of: Bert &amp; Deb – Lara, Ethan, Kitchener, Ont. Derek &amp; Patti – Kody, Zackary, Livonia, Michigan and the late Jason and Andrew. Dear sister of: Jean Bierling, Innisfil, Ont. John &amp; Rose Sneepe, Florida Wendy &amp; Harry VanderTol, Brampton, Ont. and the late Neil Sneepe</p> <p>Memorial services were held on Nov. 8, 2008 at the Orillia Christian Reformed Church.</p> <p>Correspondence: 1180 Brodie Dr RR 4, Orillia ON L3V 6H4</p>	

## Classifieds

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Please note: Anne's name was misspelled in the Dec. 8 issue. We apologize for the error.

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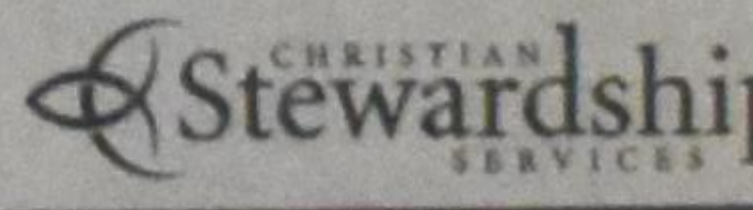
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## Campus Ministry...continued from p. 18

fabulous potential for growth and for seeing many people come home to God" (p. 89).

It took a mini-Damascus Road epiphany to convince me that sharing a beer with students or cooking a meal for them once a week or the many other forms of hospitality involved in my work, are just as much part of campus ministry as leading them in Bible study. However, while the passage of time has rendered so much of what Prof. Mias tried to convey to us in his lectures obsolete and irrelevant, the one lesson he tried to teach us, not in words but in lifestyle, I will never forget – namely that

being called by God to be a minister of His Word is in the true sense of the word an awesome responsibility that should not be taken lightly no matter what the circumstance, whether playing touch football with students or preaching a sermon on Sunday.

*André Basson is the Christian Reformed Campus Minister at Brock University. He is a South African and immigrated to Canada in 2000. He holds degrees in Classics (Latin and Greek), Theology, and a doctorate in Latin from the Université de Provence in France.*

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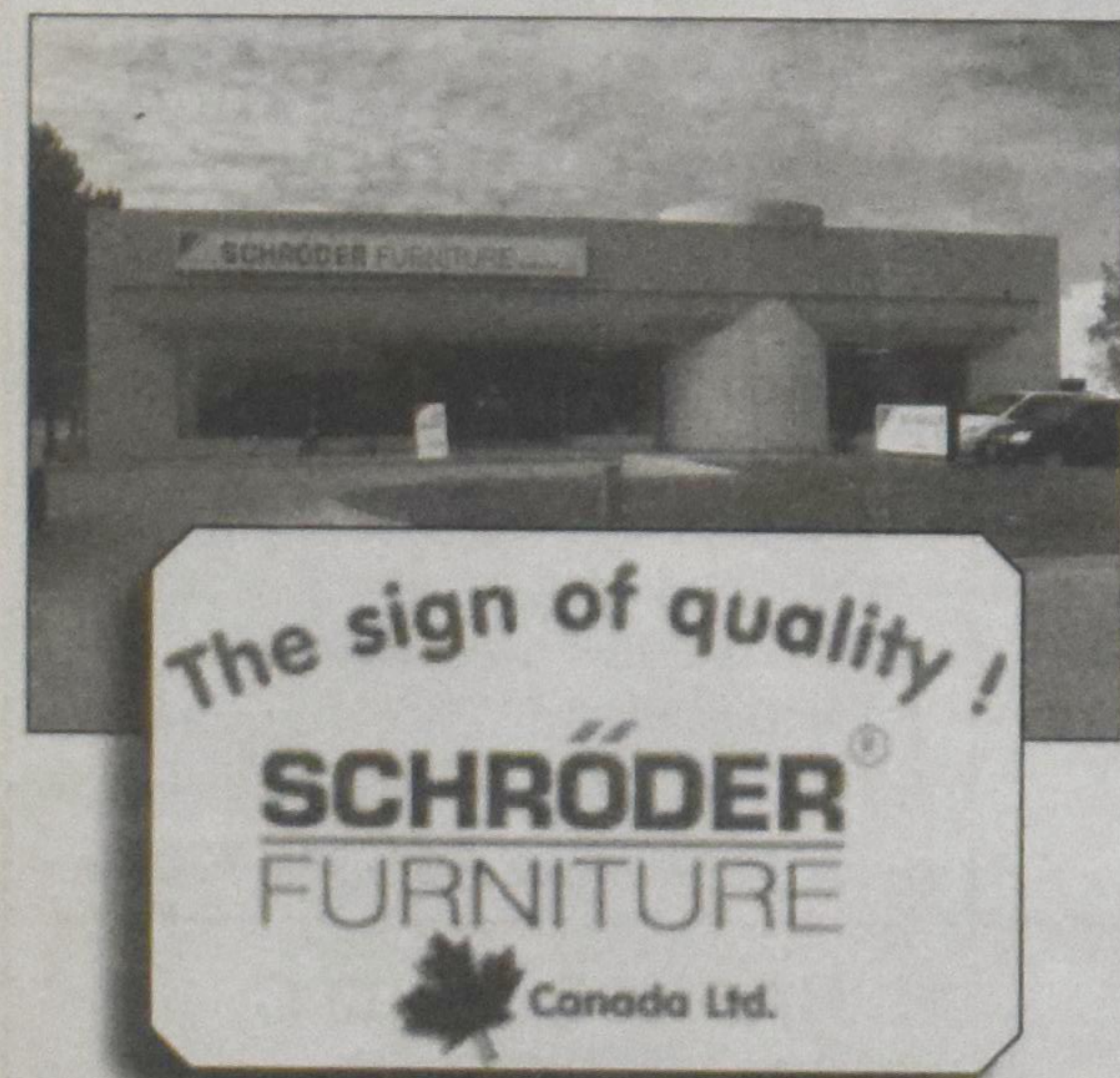
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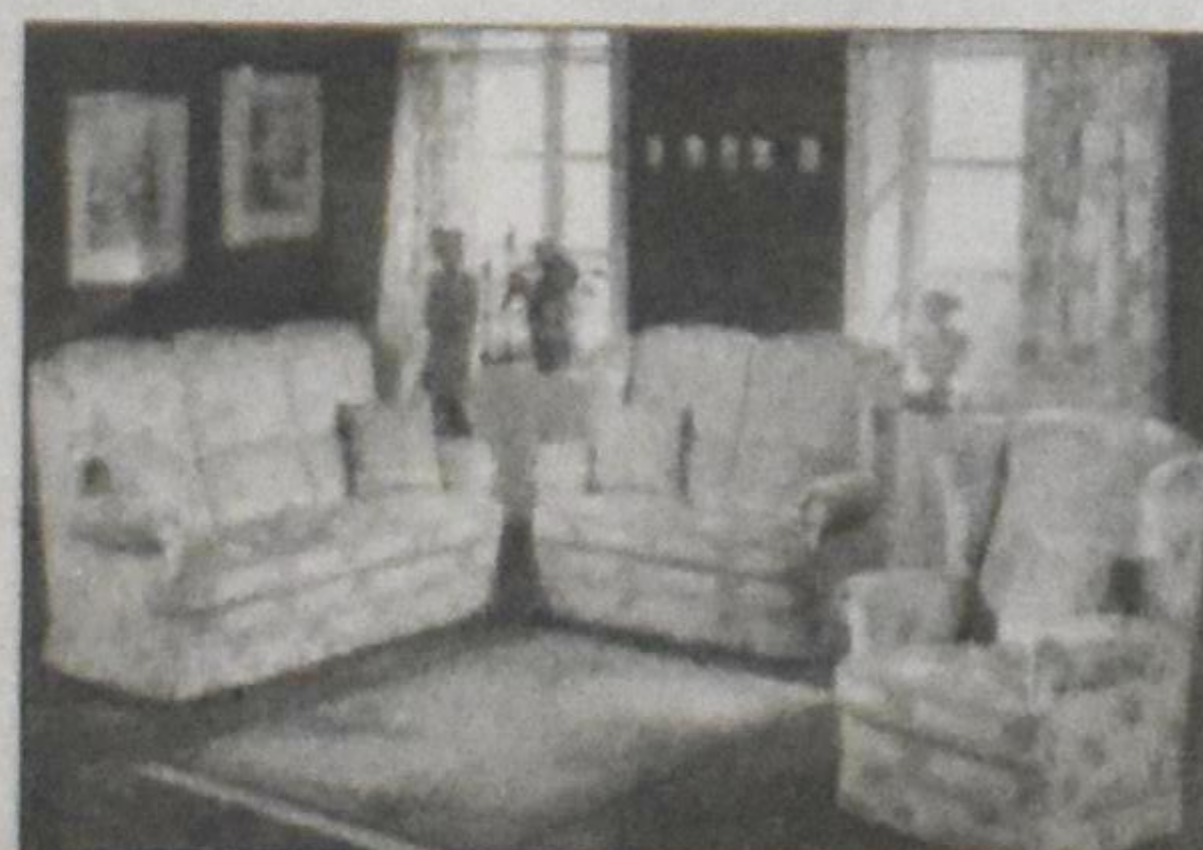


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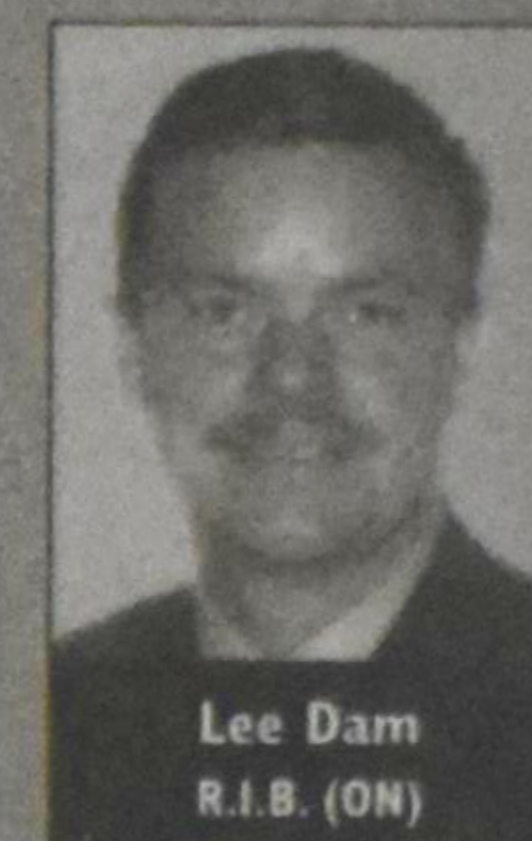
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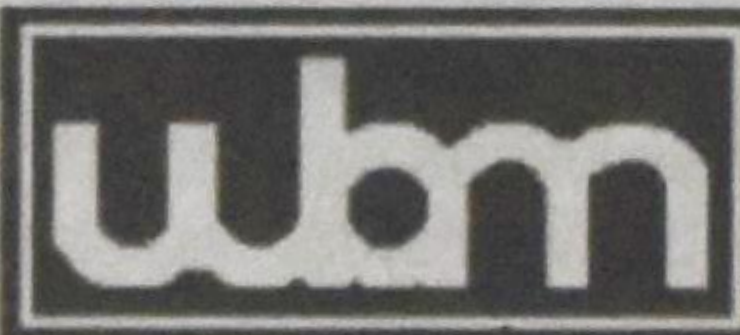
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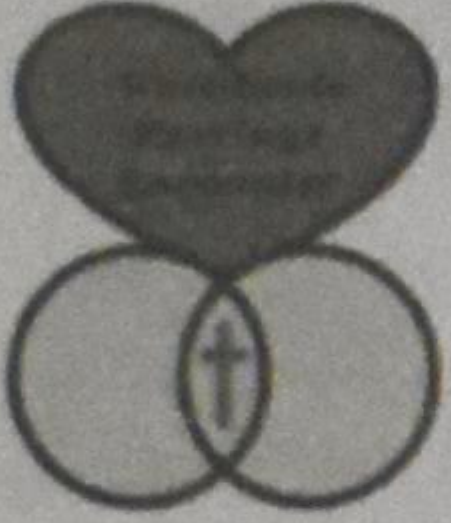
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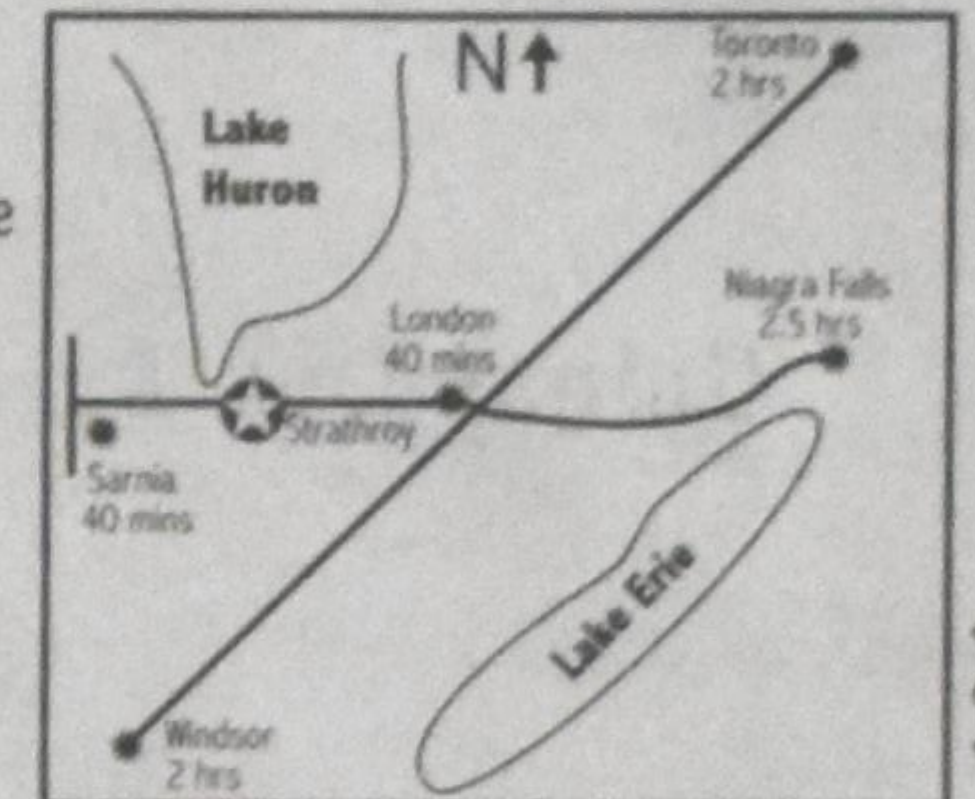
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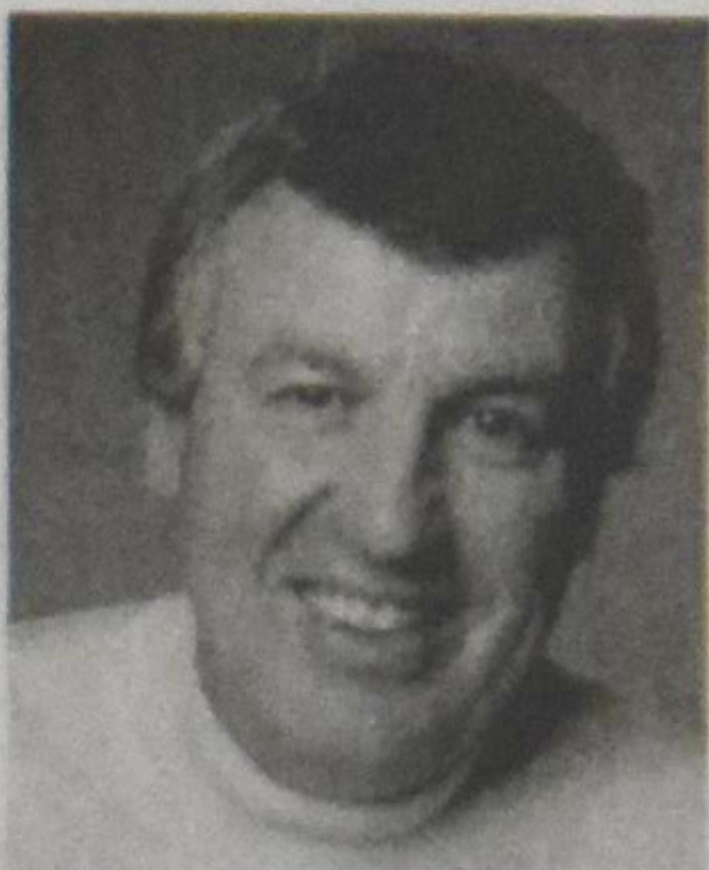
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News

Predecessor of Cows, the Aurochs, were still living in the Netherlands around AD 600



ScienceDaily – Archaeological researchers at the University of Groningen have discovered that the aurochs, the predecessor of our present-day cow, lived in the Netherlands for longer than originally assumed. Remains of bones recently retrieved from a horn core found in Holwerd (Friesland, Netherlands) show that the aurochs became extinct in around AD 600 and not in the fourth century.

The last aurochs died in Poland in 1627. In January 2008, the bony core horn was unearthed in a mound near Holwerd by amateur archaeologist Lourens Olivier from Ternaard. The Groningen Institute for Archaeology at the University of Groningen has established that it came from the left horn of an aurochs bull, and C14 dating reveals that the horn dates back to between

AD 555 and 650.

The horn core is the bony core of the horn of a bovine animal. While the aurochs was still alive, the horn core would have been covered by a sheath of horn. This horn sheath has since decomposed in the soil. The largest curve in the horn core found in Holwerd measures 59 cm. The whole horn, including the horn sheath, must have been at least 70 cm long.

The aurochs were much larger than the common cows we know today, with aurochs bulls measuring between 160 and 180 cm at the withers, and aurochs cows between 140 and 150 cm. The cattle bred on the Frisian mounds around AD 600 measured between 90 and 120 cm and their horn cores were 25 cm long at the most.

Hunters and the first Dutch farmers

hunted the aurochs. The species eventually became extinct in the Netherlands, not only because it was hunted, but also because more and more land was being used for agriculture and the human population was increasing.

Aurochs bones dating back to Roman times have previously been found at various sites in the Dutch river regions. They have also been unearthed in the terps and mounds of Friesland and Groningen. An almost complete skeleton of an aurochs was found in a terp in Britsum (Friesland), 15 km from Holwerd. It dates back to between AD 257 and 421. It was long thought that this was the most recent evidence of the aurochs that would be found, and that the aurochs had therefore become extinct in the Netherlands sometime in the fourth century AD. However, the horn core from Holwerd shows that the aurochs must have been grazing the Frisian meadows for at least another 150 to 250 years.

*The find is reported in the newsletter 'Van Warden en Terpen' (From Mounds and Terps), published in December 2008 by the Terp Research Association.*

Odds and Trends

**Priest chases thief**

Bill Hegedusich, 48, is a marathon runner and a priest at St. Peter's Catholic Church in Washington, D.C. On a Sunday last December, he saw a man take two bags of money from an unlocked safe. Hegedusich, in a black shirt and white clerical collar, pursued the thief. The priest was fast enough to recover one of the bags, containing about \$60, although the man eventually evaded him. Hegedusich returned to St. Peter's in time to celebrate the 11 a.m. mass only a few minutes late, saying "It's not my typical Sunday morning, I'll tell you that."

**Politics on centre ice**

Canada was stunned Monday when it was announced that The Stanley Cup will be awarded to the Toronto Maple Leafs. The cup will be stripped from 2008 playoff champions the Detroit Red Wings and be awarded to the Leafs, who didn't even make the playoffs.

How is this possible, Canadians ask? Well, the Leafs have formed a coalition with eastern conference semi-finalists the Montreal Canadiens, and conference quarter finalists the Ottawa Senators, and now they outnumber the Red Wings.

According to current Leaf coach Ron Wilson, "the Red Wings have lost the confidence of the league and should hand the cup over immediately to our coalition."

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman is cutting short a European trip to try to resolve the unprecedented hockey crisis that could force a second playoff series, or see an opposing team coalition take the cup ([torontosportsmedia weblog](#)).

**The Vicks debate**

Currently, in bedrooms across the nation, you might notice the strong smell of camphor – not from underneath pyjamas, but from socks. Recent rumours claim that putting Vicks VapoRub on the soles of your feet will alleviate a persistent night-time cough. The popularity of this rumour is understandable, given that nothing sounds more pathetic than a small child hacking away all night long, and many people feel uncomfortable about giving over-the-counter cough suppressants to kids. The National Research Council of Canada, however, has stated that it has not run tests to demonstrate the effectiveness of Vicks, despite the use of its name to bolster claims. Proponents state that this method "works 100 percent of the time and is more effective than even strong prescription cough medicines. In addition, it will feel like a warm blanket enveloping you." Well, I must say that's a better ad line than Buckley's.

By Angela Bick

Sudoku - Medium

	5						1	
8				4				2
2			6		3			4
		7	9		6	4		
				3				
		8	5		4	7		
7			1		9			5
6				2				1
	4						8	

Sudoku

It's a game you play against yourself – the Rubik's cube of the 21st century. Whether you have studiously avoided or feverishly devoured these, you probably recognize a Sudoku puzzle when you see it.

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